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SERMONS

ON

THE MOST

Prevalent Vices.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

An ORDINATION SERMON, a SYNOD SERMON, and TWO SERMONS on a FUTURE STATE.

BY THE

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M,DCC,LXXX.

TO

THE KING.

SIR,

AS an expreſſion of that gratitude, which I owe your Majeſty for the publick office which I hold in the Church, and as a teſtimony of that profound reſpect, which I have for your Majeſty's eſtimable and illuſtrious character, I beg leave, with becoming humility, to inſcribe to your Majeſty the following Sermons.

The

The deſign of them is to exhibit, in a juſt and ſtriking light, the deformity and danger of vice, the comelineſs and comforts of virtue. A ſtrict adherence to theſe principles is the only firm and ſolid baſis of a Chriſtian's hope, a nation's proſperity, or a king's prerogative.

If in the ſilent hour of retirement, when your mind is relaxed from the weighty concerns of your empire, and when the king is loſt in the man, you will condeſcend to read theſe ſermons which ſolicit your protection, from ſuch condeſcenſion I ſhall receive an abundant honour.

If the

If the perusal shall afford your majesty any agreeable entertainment, I shall congratulate myself, that I, one of your Majesty's remote but loyal subjects, have been able, by the blessing of God, to contribute the smallest proportion to your Majesty's happiness.

That the storm, which at present annoys your kingdom, may soon issue in a calm; that the tumults of war may soon terminate in the blessings of peace; that you may long be blessed with the company and virtues of your royal and amiable consort; that your children may inherit, not only the royal blood, but

but the royal virtues of their parents; that you may long reign in the hearts of a great and happy people; and, when it ſhall pleaſe the king of kings to remove you from a temporal kingdom, that he may advance you to a kingdom that cannot be moved, is the earneſt prayer of,

May it pleaſe your Majeſty,

your Majeſty's moſt loyal,

moſt faithful,

and moſt devoted ſubject,

DAVID LAMONT.

PREFACE.

FOR publiſhing the following ſermons I make no apology. If they are good, they require none; if they are bad, they deſerve none. To the candid reader I ſubmit them, and heartily pray that they may contribute to his real improvement.

There

There may be ſentiments in them, which, to ſome readers, may appear to be new. New, perhaps they are; but if their tendency is uſeful, their novelty ought not to prevent their utility. There may be ſentiments in them, which, to ſome readers, may appear to be untenable. Untenable, perhaps, they are: to infallibility I have no pretenſions. My judgment may betray me into error; but to known error my heart does not conſent.

In this publication, the advancement of truth is my only object. I am not conſcious, that, in any inſtance

inſtance, I have ſacrificed truth to the prejudices of a favourite ſyſtem. To the beſt of my judgment and experience, I have firmly adhered to the principles of reaſon and of Chriſtianity.

If, notwithſtanding all my precaution, vital errors, through the channel of theſe diſcourſes, ſhould creep into the world, I ſhould be extremely ſorry. To the man, who would point out ſuch errors, I ſhould be ſincerely grateful; and ſhould not delay to manifeſt my gratitude, by publickly retracting ſuch ſentiments, as, in the eye

of

of unbiaſſed reaſon, may appear to be exceptionable.

With my beſt wiſhes for the reader's temporal and ſpiritual proſperity, I am his much obliged, and moſt obedient ſervant,

DAVID LAMONT.

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ERRATUM.

P.—100. line 16. *For* rewards of puniſhments, *read* rewards and puniſhments.

SERMON I.

Againſt Evil Speaking.

James i. 26.

If any man among you ſeem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's religion is vain.

SERM. I.

OF all the vices, which reign among men, there is none more common, nor, I fear, more hurtful, than that of evil ſpeaking, which the text condemns.

There is a ſpirit of calumny gone forth into the world, which raging through every rank, and through every ſex, ſweeps, like an impetuous torrent, all before it, and

SERM. I. ſpreads, like the peſtilence that waſteth at noon-day, a rueful devaſtation all around. Every company is become a court of trial; every ſeat, a tribunal; every table, a bar of judgement: to which all are indicted, and at which almoſt all are condemned. No ſacredneſs or dignity of character, no innocence or probity of life, no propriety or ſublimity of conduct can ſecure us from the fangs of this fell deſtroyer. But all muſt ſubmit (ignominious ſlavery!) to the rude cenſure of malicious tongues.

To check the inſolence of this daring vice, is the deſign of the text; to expoſe its abſurdity, is the deſign of the diſcourſe.

This, I apprehend, is of more uſeful conſequence, than any general harangue from a general ſubject. Vague and declamatory diſcourſes are like ſhooting in the air; diſcourſes levelled at particular vices, are like ſhooting at a certain mark. The firſt never fail to leave indiſtinct and perplexed ideas. The laſt never fail to make clear impreſſions on the mind—when the

the mind poſſeſſes a capacity of receiving impreſſions. SERM. I.

In the diſcuſſion of this ſubject, I will endeavour,

1*ſt*, To illuſtrate and confirm the propoſition in the text—that the practice of evil ſpeaking, reliſhed and continued, deſtroys the whole of any man's religion. And, if I make this good, it is to be hoped, that they, who make any profeſſion of religion, will candidly renounce a practice ſo viſibly injurious to that profeſſion.

2*dly*, I will ſuggeſt ſome conſiderations to thoſe who make no profeſſion of religion, deduced from the unreaſonableneſs and abſurdity of the thing itſelf upon the principles of common ſenſe. And, if I ſucceed in this, it is to be hoped, that they, who have any pretenſions to common ſenſe, will alſo renounce a practice ſo groſly contradictory to their pretenſions.

3*dly*, I will anſwer ſome objections, which may be ſtarted againſt the text, and the diſcourſe upon it.

SERM. I. And, 4*thly*, Conclude with ſome reflections.

1*ſt*, I am to illuſtrate and confirm the propoſition in the text—that the practice of evil ſpeaking, reliſhed and continued, deſtroys the whole of any man's religion.

The grand touchſtone of truth to which we muſt refer, in order to diſcover, whether our religion is ſpurious or genuine, is this: To obſerve, from the tenor of our leading principles, whether reaſon or paſſion is the guide of life. If paſſion reigns, our religion is vain; if reaſon commands, our religion is ſolid.

The grand ſtandard to which we muſt apply, in order to know with certainty, whether reaſon or paſſion maintains the aſcendency, is this: To weigh them together in the ſcales of equity, and more eſpecially to try whether reaſon can conquer thoſe paſſions, to the indulgence of which we are peculiarly addicted, either by the native impulſe of conſtitution, or the rank which we hold in ſociety.

The

SERM. I.

The propriety of this examination is abundantly manifeſt. For, if reaſon only governs, when paſſion lies aſleep—if reaſon only dictates, when no paſſion rebels, —this, ſure, can be no more a proof that we are good Chriſtians, than the wearing of a red coat, in time of peace, would be a demonſtrative evidence that we are good ſoldiers. To obey the will of God, when it coincides with our own, is doing nothing. It is not pleaſing God—It is merely pleaſing ourſelves. But, to obey the will of God in oppoſition to our own, is an invincible proof, that our religion is ſterling. For, what is religion, but an unlimited ſubmiſſion to the will of God?

It is to be feared, my brethren, and, if true, to be lamented, that there are ſome men in the world, whoſe moral faculties are miſerably depraved by vice, and overſpread with the leproſy of wickedneſs—who are as covetous, for inſtance, as is conſiſtent with their licentiouſneſs; and as licentious, as is conſiſtent with their covetouſ-

SERM. I. neſs. But this loathſome character, it is plain, does not belong to the generality of mankind. One favourite paſſion maintains the ſway—rules the heart—and leads us where it will. To guard againſt this, therefore, is the proper buſineſs of every Chriſtian; and to conquer it ſucceſsfully, the deciſive teſt of every good one.

Now, my friends, if the principles, which excite us to the obedience of the divine law, are love to God, and a ſenſe of his authority, regard to Chriſt, and the intereſts of eternity; they will invincibly operate through every part of life, and make us obedient to the whole law. Becauſe, upon the whole law, the ſame authority, the ſame love, the ſame happineſs, are evidently ſtamped.

Hence the apoſtle James ſpeaks as good philoſophy as divinity, when he ſays, "Whoſoever keepeth the whole law beſides, "and yet offendeth in one point, is guilty "of all *." How can that be? Becauſe he,

* James ii. 10.

who

who wilfully and habitually offendeth againſt any one law, by that conduct plainly contemns the authority of the legiſlator. And, when the authority of the legiſlator is contemned, the obligation of the law loſes its influence. For, when once the authority is deſpiſed, which enacted the law, the law muſt be deſpiſed which was enacted by that authority. Becauſe, when once the lawgiver is held in contempt, the law, which he eſtabliſhes, is thenceforth good for nothing; "but like ſalt, when it has loſt its "ſavour, to be caſt out, and trodden under "foot."

SERM. I.

It is evident, moreover, that he, who offends habitually againſt any one law, is guilty of all, becauſe he is ſincere in his obedience to none. It is the inward principle or affection of ſoul, which prompts us to the performance of any action, that makes the action either good or bad. If, therefore, the principles, which move us to be religious, are religious principles, they will move us to be ſo in every condition,

SERM. I. and in every reſpect, without exception, and without reſerve; becauſe ſuch is the will of God, and ſuch the path to happineſs.

Hence, if any man indulges himſelf in the practice of any one vice—of evil ſpeaking, for inſtance; that moſt notorious and damnable vice—it is clear as the light of the ſun, that there is not one ſcrap of religion in his heart—but that all the pomp of his apparent virtues is nothing elſe but a beauty waſh, to give a gloſs to his complexion—a painted outſide, to conceal his internal deformity—a glittering diſplay of ſhewy qualities, to gild the life with ſuperficial ſplendor—whilſt the ſoul within is full of rottenneſs and dead mens bones, and totally void of that Chriſtian ſincerity, which ſhould be the moving ſpring of Chriſtian conduct.

Now, if any perſon ſhould think proper to deny this, I would beg to be informed, from what principle the practice of evil ſpeaking proceeds. Not, I hope, from a ſincere regard to God, and an awful ſenſe of

of his authority. By no means—but from a violent attachment to that vice, which, in heart and ſoul, we prefer to God—to his authority—and to every conſideration whatſoever. Otherwiſe, would he ever violate the divine authority for the ſake of backbiting? Or proſtitute the religion of Chriſt to the cauſe of calumny? SERM. I.

The only ſuppoſable reaſon, why a man, habituated to the practice of evil ſpeaking, is not equally a proficient in every other ſpecies of villany, is this—that he has not the ſame reliſh for, the ſame opportunities of, and the ſame temptations to other criminal indulgencies, that he has to this. For, if he had, he would be equally guilty in every other reſpect, as he is in this. And I will venture to affirm (deny it who will) that the ſame baſeneſs and littleneſs of ſoul, which prompts a man to hear with avidity, and propagate with pleaſure, the reports of malice, would alſo lead him to commit adultery, perjury, or theft, if the inclination were equally ſtrong, the opportunity equally convenient,

and

SERM. I. and the temptation equally inviting *. For the fountain of vice is nothing elſe but the malignity of a debaſed ſpirit.

The propoſition in the text, therefore, comes forth as a manifeſt concluſion from the whole, "That if any man ſeem to be "religious."—How beautifully does the apoſtle qualify the aphoriſm! He does not ſay is religious—that is impoſſible—"But ſeem to be religious, and bridleth "not his tongue, that man's religion is "vain."

Hence, too, by the light of this argument, are clearly ſeen the juſtice and propriety of thoſe repeated declarations in the New Teſtament.—that all liars and defamers, backbiters and revilers, ſhall never inherit the kingdom of heaven. Alas! it is

* He, who malignant tears an abſent friend,
Or, when attack'd by others, don't defend;
Who trivial burſts of laughter ſtrives to raiſe,
And courts of prating petulance the praiſe;
Of things he never ſaw who tells his tale,
And friendſhip's ſecrets knows not to conceal,
This man is vile; here, Roman, fix your mark;
His ſoul is black, as his complexion's dark.

FRANCIS's HORACE

is impoſſible for ſuch mortals to put on im- SERM. I.
mortality; or for creatures of ſuch dark and depraved ſentiments, to receive bleſſedneſs from the endearments of that divine ſociety, where peace maintains an univerſal ſway.— love mutually circulates through every boſom—and happineſs keeps her everlaſting court.

But again—The practice of evil ſpeaking makes our religion vain—becauſe it plainly demonſtrates that we are deſtitute of every good and worthy principle; of every generous and noble ſentiment; of that Chriſtian charity, which, as it never thinketh; ſo far leſs ever ſpeaketh any evil; and of that love, which is the baſis of religion, and the fulfilment of the law.

The whole ſecond table of the law, which relates to man, and is founded upon the principles of love and charity, falls, alas! a mournful ſacrifice to this curſed vice; and, if the ſecond falls, the firſt is too near it to ſtand long. "For, if we love not our "brethren whom we have ſeen, how," in the

SERM. I. the name of religion, "can we love God "whom we have not ſeen *." Charity is the only teſt of piety—the love of man, the only criterion of the love of God. And, if any man pretend to poſſeſs an unfeigned friendſhip for any other man, whilſt he is levelling againſt him the poiſonous arrows of detraction; I will ſay, his friendſhip is ſtrangely metaphyſical; and that his ſentiments are as oppoſite to the common meaſures of love, as his practices are oppoſite to the common meaſures of religion.

What is the reaſon, my friends, that we never ſpeak evil of ourſelves? The reaſon is plain—becauſe we love ourſelves. Now, if we loved our neighbours as ourſelves,—which we would do, were we Chriſtians—we would be as tender of their character, as we are of our own; becauſe the principle of love is the ſame in both.

What is the reaſon, I beſeech you, that we are ſo unwilling to hear, ſo ſlow to believe, and ſo quick to reſent any injury of

* 1 John iv. 20.

this

this kind, done to thoſe for whom we have contracted a ſteady attachment, whether from the maſculine principles of friendſhip, or the more delicate impreſſions of love? The reaſon is obvious—becauſe our kindly affections overbalance our ſpleen, and love becomes, of conſequence, the ſpring of our conduct. SERM. I.

Now, were this love ſhed abroad, and theſe affections univerſal—as our religion directs that they ſhould be—then it would be impoſſible for us to aſperſe, without neceſſity, the characters of thoſe who are impreſſed with the image of the ſame God, joint partakers of the ſame redemption, and fellow-travellers to the ſame immortality. Yes, it would be impoſſible. The voice of conſcience would forbid the inſult, and every gentle feeling ſhrink back from the enormity.

Were this the caſe, happineſs would erect its throne upon earth; and miſery, taking the wings of the morning, would fly to the uttermoſt parts of the ſea; the heart

SERM. I. the heart of malevolence would be entirely broke, and the habits of wickedneſs eternally annihilated. The ſpirit of harmony, emerging from the wrecks of diſorder, would change the face of nature, and give life a new ſpring. Friendſhip, reſiding in every boſom, and reflected from every life, would convert the barreh deſert to a fruitful paradiſe, and make the vale of tears a ſweet foretaſte of heaven. Hail—Happy—Glorious period—thou lovely object of a good man's wiſh—but ſcarcely, alas! of his expectation.

But, my brethen, if the goſpel has not this effect upon us—does not inſpire us with Chriſtian diſpoſitions, or perſuade us to cultivate the generous affections—is it not, to every intelligent ſpectator, a concluſive argument, that, whatever we pretend, we believe not a word of it, but conſider it as a romantic fiction—a fable cunningly deviſed?

If, in ſpite of all our pretenſions to godlineſs, we ſtill retain ſouls of wormwood and

and hearts of gall, what is our profeſſion but a gay and ſplendid hyprocriſy? our baptiſm, but a vague and nominal diſtinction? and our religion, but a dead and unanimated carcaſe? For, the very eſſence of true religion, the very province of true faith, is to purify the heart, and to work by love. If then, in our hearts, there is no room for the entertainment of love and charity—let us not deceive ourſelves—in heaven there will be no room for the entertainment of thoſe, who are dead to the culture of theſe amiable virtues. SERM. I.

Now, heaven is the ultimate end of all religion. But, if our end is excluſion from heaven, then one would imagine, that our religion is vain with a witneſs. "Without the gates of the city," ſays the apoſtle, "are dogs"—that is men of a curriſh, ſnarling, and ſnappiſh diſpoſition, who hunt after the innocent, and worry them with the envenomed teeth of defamation. And it is impoſſible, that they can ever enter or become vital members of that celeſtial corpo-

SERM. I. corporation, of which charity is the only law, truth the only light, and eternity the only boundary.

What remains muſt be deferred to another occaſion.

SERMON

SERMON II.

Againſt Evil Speaking.

JAMES i. 26.

If any man among you ſeem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's religion is vain.

IN a former diſcourſe I attempted to il- SERM. II.
luſtrate the propoſition in the text, which is, that the practice of evil ſpeaking, reliſhed and continued, deſtroys the whole of any man's religion.

SERM. II.

I come now, in the ſecond place, to ſuggeſt ſome conſiderations to thoſe who make no profeſſion of religion, deduced from the unreaſonableneſs and abſurdity of the thing itſelf upon the principles of common ſenſe.

Every man, by the conſtitution of nature, and the eſtabliſhment of ſociety, is inveſted with many valuable privileges, which are eſteemed his right or property. And this right or property is held ſacred; and every unlawful infringement upon it is conſidered, and with the utmoſt reaſon, as a manifeſt violation of material juſtice.

Now, in the eſtimation of a thinking man, of all properties, next to life, character is the deareſt—infinitely preferable to the goods of fortune—and, to a generous mind, preferable even to life itſelf—becauſe a man of real ſenſe wiſely conſiders, that it is better not to be, than to be miſerable—not to live, than to live in contempt. To rob, therefore, any man

of his character, wantonly or maliciously, is void of every rational plea, and is manifeſt injuſtice. Such deteſtable conduct can only ſpring from villainy incarnate; from a ſoul dead to honour, and buried in the loweſt grave of depravity. SERM. II.

In forming an opinion of our neighbour's goods, this great rule ſhould be invariably obſerved—we ought not eſtimate their worth according to the caprice of our own fancy, but according to the price fixed upon them by the proprietor. Hence, we ought not to regard as a ſhadow, what he values as a ſubſtance; or eſteem that as a trifle, which he prizes as a jewel. A man values his life: murder, therefore, is injurious and unlawful. But if he prefers his reputation to his life, then is defamation the worſt ſpecies of murder. This ſentiment is expreſſed, with emphatical ſublimity, by an author of the firſt reputation, * "Who" ſteals my purſe, ſteals "traſh; 'tis ſomething, nothing; 'twas

* Shakeſpear.

SERM. II. "mine, 'tis his, and has been ſlave to "thouſands: but he that filches from me "my good name, robs me of that which "not enriches him, and makes me poor "indeed."

The conſequence is, that evil ſpeaking, conſidered with reſpect to our neighbour, is unreaſonable and unjuſt—unreaſonable, becauſe unjuſt. This practice is equally abſurd, with reſpect to ourſelves. He that gives a bad character of his neighbour, gives, in the firſt place, a worſe one of himſelf.

Evil ſpeaking is not only a bad thing, but an infallible mark of a bad man. At what wickedneſs will ſuch a man boggle, may every perſon ſay, who is thus aſſiduous to imitate the devil? From what crime will ſuch a man fly, whoſe heart is the habitation of malevolence, and whoſe tongue is the vehicle of ſlander? His ſpeeches, thus, which are intended as a ſatire upon others, providentially inverted, become

come a ſatire on himſelf; and, like Haman, he is hanged upon his own gallows. SERM. II.

He that ſpeaks evil of one, threatens all; and where all are threatned, none are ſafe. The words of ſuch a man are a proclamation of war. His throat is an open ſepulchre, and in his mouth are lodged the inſtruments of death. If this man, may every judicious obſerver ſay, ſpeaks to me with ſo much freedom of others, without all doubt, when once it comes to be my turn, he will ſpeak to others with as much freedom of me. Nothing, but the moſt partial ſelf-love, can induce me to form a different concluſion. I muſt, therefore, look upon him with a jealous eye; guard againſt him, as a common enemy; and ſhun his company, as I would ſhun a thief. O God, defend the righteous from the man, under whoſe lips is the poiſon of adders; and hide the upright, in the ſecret of thy pavilion, from the ſtrife of tongues!

SERM. II. Conſider, my friends, I beſeech you, for a moment, the black and direful effects of this inhuman and villainous practice; and if the baſeneſs of its nature will not, let the horror of its conſequences deter you from it. Conſider, how apt the man, whom you injure, is to retaliate, and pay, to the laſt farthing, the debt which he owes you. Conſider, how oft a ſpiteful word has been the cauſe of a quarrel, and a reproachful ſpeech coſt the author his life. Conſider, how oft calumny has preceded deſtruction, and the man of ſatire been the object of contempt. Had we, then, no regard for the religion of Jeſus, no regard for the human race, yet ſtill, I think, ſelf-love ſhould prompt us to have ſome regard for ourſelves.

The concluſion, therefore, of the whole matter is this—let not any man venture to feed himſelf, or others, upon ſlander, till ſuch time as he can ſay, with a ſtout heart, and a ſafe conſcience, that he is afraid

afraid neither of God nor man; but is determined, without heſitation, to follow the counſel of Job's *placid and good natured wife*—"To curſe God, and die. *

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3*dly*, I proceed to anſwer ſome objections, which may be ſtarted againſt the doctrine which we have attempted to eſtabliſh.

Objection firſt—It may be ſaid; if evil ſpeaking were aboliſhed, vice would triumph—becauſe the tongues of men are a greater check to vice, than the power of religion. So much the greater pity, that religion has ſo little influence—ſo much the greater folly, that we are more afraid of men than of God.

But whatever truth may be in this doctrine, it is of no conſequence to us—becauſe we are not to do evil—no—we are not to ſpeak evil, that good may come. The damnation of ſuch, as act upon this unwarrantable principle, is, by the voice

* Job. ii. 9.

SERM. II. of Heaven, declared to be juſt. Our buſineſs is ſimply this—to preſerve our own integrity, in the firſt place; and, then, to promote the integrity of others—not by the wiles of craft and ſlander, but upon the plan of truth and innocence.

But, if there is no other check to vice than the tongue, it would be better, that a certain ſum ſhould be ſet apart from the public funds of each town or pariſh; or, if that will not do, that private contributions ſhould be made from our particular revenues, to hire a proper number of cavaliers, who are expert at this ſcience, to conjure down vice by the laſh of obloquy, and with the tongue to ſtop the inundations of licentiouſneſs—much better, than that good, pious Chriſtian people ſhould be put upon ſo baſe, and odious a work, ſo diſagreeable to the ſoft ſpirit of humanity, and ſo repugnant to the mild and gentle temper of the goſpel.

But, upon reflection, this appears to be ſuperfluous. For though not one, that ſeemeth

ſeemeth to be religious, ſhould ever open his mouth, yet there will be abundance of malevolent ſpirits in the word, to keep detraction in exiſtence, vice in ſubjection, and vicious men in durance and captivity.

I wiſh, at any rate, we would try the experiment; but, at no rate, adopt this as a maxim of conduct—that we will go ourſelves to Hell, that others, through our charity, may go to Heaven. This would be purchaſing their reformation at a price too high: this would be an inſtance of generoſity quite unnatural: this would be a ſpecies of virtue quite prepoſterous.

Objection ſecond—It may be ſaid; if this doctrine ſtands, converſation will fall, becauſe evil ſpeaking ſeems to be its firmeſt prop. Alas! is converſation come to an ebb ſo low, that nothing will entertain us, but ſlander? Alas! are our judgments ſo ſhallow, our invention ſo barren, that, amidſt all the fruitful fields of converſation,

SERM. II. verſation, we can find nothing but ſlander?

O Britain! are integrity and honour, benevolence and truth, ſo far departed from thee, that, within thy ſhores, thou canſt impart to thy inhabitants, no pleaſures of diſcourſe comparable to ſlander? Have innocence and virtue abandoned the world, and left behind them nothing but ſlander? What! can you not talk of the works of nature, the wonders of providence, the pleaſures of religion, the beauty of virtue, the deformity of vice? Or, if you are too faſhionable for ſubjects of this kind, can you not talk of aſtronomy, farming, architecture, the political conſtitutions of government, the liberty of the Britiſh ſubject, and the happineſs connected with that liberty? Or, if you have not ſteadineſs of mind to proſecute ſubjects like theſe, can you not talk of the weather, the faſhions of the country, or the modes of dreſs? For though it is true, that theſe are very

very inſipid topics of converſation, yet it muſt be allowed, that they are better than ſlander. Though they are flat, yet they are harmleſs; though they communicate no rational inſtruction, yet they do not give proofs of a malignant ſpirit. SERM. II.

But, if none of theſe ſubjects will pleaſe you, the only advice I can give you farther, is, to hold your tongue. It is better to be innocently dull, than maliciouſly merry—to be inoffenſively ſilent, than injuriouſly talkative,—for if it is better not to ſpeak, than to ſpeak nonſenſe, ſurely it is much better not to ſpeak, than to ſpeak evil. And I am verily perſuaded, that, if a great many of us ſpoke a great deal leſs than we do, both with regard to our own perfections and our neighbours failings, we might yet enjoy good health and peace of conſcience, paſs many happy days, and travel through life with reſpect and approbation.

You may intruſt a ſecret to a friend, of whoſe friendſhip you have had ſubſtantial

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tial proofs, on whoſe prudence you can ſafely rely, and in whoſe integrity you can repoſe an unlimited confidence. But in mixed companies, beware what you ſay. Set a watch before the door of your lips, that you offend not with your tongue. Let your ſpeech be ſeaſoned with ſalt, that your cool and deliberate reflections may not have reaſon to upbraid your raſh and precipitate expreſſions. The perfections of mankind exhibit and extol; their imperfections, with a judicious benevolence, caſt into a ſhade. Speak well of every man, as far as truth will ſupport you. Speak evil of no man, without an abſolute neceſſity. Celebrate real worth with deſerved applauſes, but let the worthleſs paſs by in ſilent contempt.

Thus, by bridling your tongue with a watchful attention, and travelling, without offence, through the quiet walks of life, you will ſecure the approbation of the world—what is more, you will ſecure the

the approbation of your own mind—and what is ſtill more, you will ſecure the approbation of God. SERM. II.

3*dly*, I will conclude the diſcourſe with a few reflections.

Conſider, my friends, the ſinfulneſs of this epidemical diſtemper, and how far it is beneath the character of a diſciple of Chriſt. Conſider the baſeneſs of this diſhonourable practice, and how far it is beneath the dignity of a man of ſenſe. Conſider, how cheap it is not to ſpeak evil, and how charitable too. Other kinds of charity may be expenſive; but here, even the covetous man may be liberal, without opening his purſe. Conſider the numberleſs frailties which mortality inherits, and cover them with a veil of generous compaſſion. Conſider, that evil ſpeaking is the mother of miſchief, and that a lying tongue is but for a moment. Conſider, that the tongue is the glory of man: do not then turn your glory

SERM. II. glory into ſhame. Conſider the genuine complexion of your own mind, and let him, who is innocent, caſt the firſt ſtone. Conſider, that Hell is the portion of the backbiter, and that the man, who walketh in the paths of ſlander, is going to the Devil. Conſider, that in Heaven all is peace and ſerenity, and that nothing which diſturbeth can enter there. Conſider, that earth is the ſchool of diſcipline for Heaven, and that, ere long, we muſt ſtand an impartial trial. Conſider, that then the Chriſtian will be crowned with glory, but the calumnious tongue be tormented with flames.

God forbid, that, at that awful period, when melting elements and a burning world ſhall declare, that the end of all things is come, thoſe infernal principles, from which evil ſpeaking proceeds, ſhould force us to call upon the mountains to cover us—make us wiſh to have remained in the dark gloom of the grave, or to have lain

lain in the ſhades of everlaſting night! But, rather, may the principles of pure religion enable us to look, with encreaſing rapture, for the bleſſed hope and glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour—that when the great ſhepherd of the ſheep ſhall appear in the clouds of Heaven, with power and great glory, calling out with a loud voice, "Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me"—each of us may be prepared to anſwer—"Even ſo come, Lord Jeſus; Amen." SERM. II.

SERMON

SERMON III.

Againſt the DEBAUCHERY of the HEART.

MATTHEW v. 27.

—Ye have heard that it was ſaid by them of old time, thou ſhalt not commit adultery; But I ſay unto you, that whoſoever looketh upon a woman to luſt after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

A Diſtinguiſhing excellence of the Chriſtian religion is, that it makes its addreſſes to the heart. The law of Moſes required only external decency; The law of Chriſt requires, that external decency ſhould flow

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from principle. "Ye have heard that it "was ſaid by them of old time, thou ſhalt "not commit adultery."—This was the precept of Moſes. Then follows the ſpirituality of this precept by Chriſt—— "But I ſay unto you, that whoſoever "looketh upon a woman to luſt after her, "hath committed adultery with her already "in his heart."

In diſcourſing upon ſubjects of this nature, we cannot be too careful, neither to circumſcribe nor enlarge, neither to ſwell nor contract the ſyſtem of duty delivered from Heaven. Agreeably to this obſervation, I will endeavour to connect the following obſervations with the Truth, as it is from Heaven.

1ſt. I will attempt to ſhew, In what the debauchery or adultery of the heart conſiſts.

2dly. I will attempt to prove, that the debauchery of the heart, in the eſtimation of God, is, to all intents and purpoſes, the ſame as the debauchery of the life.

3dly.

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3dly. I will conclude the diſcourſe with two exhortations—The firſt, againſt the practice of adultery—The ſecond, againſt that debauchery of heart, from which adultery proceeds, and which in itſelf is, before God, of the ſame eſſential malignity.

1ſt. I am to ſhew in what the debauchery or adultery of the heart conſiſts.

The debauchery of the heart does not conſiſt in the firſt motions, which ariſe in the mind, from the view of external objects. This truth will appear with moſt convincing evidence, if we conſider attentively the law of nature, and the law of religion.

1ſt. Let us conſider the law of nature.

Man is evidently a compoſition of reaſon and of appetite. In the conſtruction of man, appetite is as eſſential to body, as reaſon is to mind. Appetite is planted in us to move us to action; reaſon is given us to lead us to right action. No appetite or paſſion which forms a part of, or natively reſults from our conſtitution, is or can be criminal in itſelf—becauſe every ſuch appetite or

SERM. III. paſſion is there the work of the Divinity, the immediate gift of God to man. No ſurrounding object, for the ſame reaſon, is or can be criminal—becauſe every object, which ſurrounds us, is alſo the workmanſhip of heaven; and nothing, which God either gives or does, can be criminal.

But here a queſtion may occur—In what then does vice conſiſt? To which the anſwer is ready—vice does not conſiſt in the ſinfulneſs of any paſſion which God has given us, nor in the ſinfulneſs of any object which God has made—No—but in the improper application of the appetite to the object, or in carrying the indulgence to exceſs, when the application is proper. Thus, for inſtance, hunger and thirſt are appetites in our nature, perfectly innocent. Meat and drink, the immediate objects of theſe appetites, are objects perfectly innocent. Theſe appetites only become ſinful when they grow irregular, and are miſapplied to the purpoſes of gluttony and drunkenneſs; and even then, the fault is not in the appetites, but in the man who miſapplies them.

Upon

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Upon the ſame principle, I humbly conceive, that the deſire of multiplying our ſpecies, in that way which nature, or rather the God of nature, has directed, is an appetite in our nature perfectly innocent; and not only ſo, but perfectly neceſſary. The immediate objects of this appetite are alſo objects perfectly innocent. Whence I infer, whatever impreſſions theſe objects make upon this deſire, are not criminal—becauſe this deſire, and theſe impreſſions, immediately ſpring from the very law of our nature, which, as I have ſhewn, is the very law of God.

2dly. Let us conſider the law of religion. By the law of religion and morals, all ſin confeſſedly conſiſts in the conſent of the will to an action, or ſentiment, deformed and criminal. Now external objects, which preſent themſelves to our ſenſes, and the ideas of theſe objects, which afterwards may play upon our fancies, force themſelves upon us without the conſent of our will. Con-

SERM. III. ſequently the ſoul, in receiving ſuch impreſſions, muſt be altogether paſſive. So far as the ſoul is paſſive in receiving its impreſſions, ſo far it is involuntary; and whatever is involuntary, is not criminal, becauſe ſuch action, if action it may be called, is not the action of man as a conſcious being, but the mere effect of an inſtinctive impulſe: and ſo far as any thing is inſtinctive, it is ſo far natural; ſo far as any thing is natural, it is ſo far neceſſary; ſo far as any thing is neceſſary, it is ſo far innocent—becauſe as no principle, or act of reaſon or religion in us, can poſſibly prevent theſe firſt impreſſions, which are neceſſary, from being made, and theſe firſt motions from being raiſed, it is very apparent, that God in juſtice cannot charge us with them, nor can we in reaſon be accountable for them. For we cannot ſuppoſe the righteous Governor of the Univerſe, in his conduct towards his intelligent and moral ſubjects, to act but upon the principles of reaſon and juſtice—but where would be either the reaſon or juſtice

tice of laying all mankind under an invinci- SERM. III.
ble neceſſity of ſinning, and then puniſhing them for doing that to which they were invincibly impelled? A law cannot be promulged to us, as the ſtandard of our duty, to which we cannot conform by the utmoſt efforts of our ſtrength: but we muſt ever be exempted from all obligations to ſuch acts of obedience, as it is abſolutely impoſſible for us to perform.

Thus it is manifeſt, both from nature and religion, that the firſt impreſſions, which external objects make upon us, are not criminal. This is the expreſs idea of our Saviour in the text. He does not ſay, that every man is an adulterer in his heart, who looks upon a woman—No—but he only, who looks upon a woman, ſo as to luſt after her; that is, to luſt after the unlawful enjoyment of her. It is this alone, which, according to our Saviour, conſtitutes the adultery of the heart; and, if this was his idea, I think it ſhould likewiſe be ours.

I ſaid, that no object is ſinful in itſelf; and

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I repeat it. But, though no object is ſinful in itſelf—as every object is the work of God—Yet the enjoyment of ſome objects, by reaſon of their particular circumſtances, like the inſtance in the text, may be unlawful to us. Now, when the will conſents to the propriety of impreſſions, made upon the ſenſes by an object, of which the enjoyment is unlawful; when the heart cheriſhes thoſe motions, which ariſe from theſe impreſſions; when the man indulges thoſe deſires, which ſpring from theſe motions; when he fully reſolves to grant to theſe deſires their reſpective gratifications; and, laſt of all, when he contrives ſchemes, and courts opportunities, for carrying theſe reſolutions into complete execution; then the heart is become debauched. The moment that the ſoul indulges unlawful deſires, that moment it ceaſes to be paſſive. The moment that it reſolves upon unlawful enjoyment, that moment it commences active, and in this activity it commences criminal.

I ſhall ſhut up this argument by an eaſy compariſon,

compariſon, which, I hope, will give light and ſtrength to it. Suppoſe two men, of an equally warm and ſanguine complexion, preſented with an object calculated to excite this native warmth of conſtitution. What would be the conſequence? Why, the impreſſion, made by the object, would be the ſame in both, becauſe the animal nature is the ſame in both. The only difference is this: the one indulges the unlawful deſire, and, in ſpite of every motive to the contrary, reſolves upon the unlawful enjoyment; the other, conſcious that the enjoyment would be unlawful, controuls the appetite, and curbs its violence. The inference is: the one is guilty; the other innocent: the firſt impreſſion is common to both. SERM. III.

All this is illuſtrated, with admirable propriety, by the Apoſtle James, * who, in every argument, diſcovers the philoſopher as well as the divine; an obſervation, which, I am ſorry to ſay, does not apply to every divine. "Let no man ſay when he is

* James i. 13. 14. 15.

tempted,

SERM. III. "tempted, I am tempted of God: for God "cannot be tempted with evil, neither "tempteth he any man. But every man "is tempted when he is drawn away by "his own luſt, and enticed. Then when "luſt hath conceived, it bringeth forth "ſin; and ſin, when it is finiſhed, bring-"eth forth death." Obſerve, the Apoſtle does not ſay that luſt is ſin, that is, that the animal deſires of our nature, here termed luſt, are ſinful. No: this would have reproached the Creator. But he ſays, that the reſolution to gratify thoſe deſires, upon objects whoſe ſituation renders their enjoyment unlawful, is ſinful. For ſin does not conſiſt in luſt, but in the conception of luſt; and death conſiſts in the completion of ſin. Having thus conſidered in what conſiſts the debauchery of the heart, I proceed

2dly: To ſhew, that a debauched heart is, in the eſtimation of God, to all intents and purpoſes, the ſame as a debauched life.

That the heart or will is, in man, the ſeat of

of virtue or of vice, is admitted by all men of ſenſe as an undiſputed maxim. The outward actions of the life are only the public repreſentatives of our private ſentiments; only ſo many channels, through which the heart vents and diſcharges its various paſſions; or rather, if you pleaſe, ſo many mirrors, by the reflection of which the internal diſpoſitions of the ſoul become externally viſible. SERM. III.

Actions, viewed in a moral light, are to the ſoul, what ſtreams are to the fountain, or branches to the root. Branches have no exiſtence, but what they derive from the root; ſtreams have no exiſtence, but what they derive from the fountain: ſo, actions have no moral exiſtence, but what they derive from the heart.

Our actions invariably ſpring from the laſt determination of the will; of conſequence are neceſſary, and therefore, conſidered by themſelves, are neither good nor bad. It is the diſpoſition of the heart, from which they ſpring, that gives them either

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either a virtuous or a vicious complexion, that renders them either laudable or blameable. The inference is plain. The action, which is only an effect, cannot be accountable for itſelf; but the ſoul, which is the cauſe of action, muſt be accountable for thoſe actions, of which it is the cauſe.

This is a manifeſt proof, that the heart or will, in man, is the only ſeat of goodneſs, or of guilt. The heart is the rule of judgment with reſpect to God: with reſpect to man, the rule of judgment is the life. When man judges man, the ſtandard of judgment is action. The reaſon is evident—becauſe one man cannot ſee another man's heart. That body of matter, with which the ſoul is ſurrounded, ſhuts it up in impenetrable darkneſs, and renders it inviſible to the eyes of mortals; ſo that we can only inveſtigate its inward principles by its outward expreſſions. And yet, even with reſpect to the judgment of man, we do not praiſe or condemn an action, merely as it is an action, but as we eſteem it the

interpreter

interpreter of a kind, or a malevolent intention. Thus, though we are highly offended at an inſult, or a blow, which we receive from a man, whoſe will ſeems to conſent to the malignity; yet we never reſent the inſult of an idiot, or the ſtroke of a convulſive man, becauſe the action appears to be involuntary, and not to proceed from a malicious or an unfriendly intent. SERM. III.

The fact is, actions are judged by men, to be good or bad, agreeable or diſagreeable, as they appear to be the index of the will. This muſt be our invariable touchſtone of truth, whilſt we ſojourn in this ſtate of imperfect knowledge and comparative obſcurity, where expreſſion is the only avenue to ſentiment, and action the only publiſher of intention.

But God ſees not as man ſees; conſequently judges not as man judges. He ſees all things as they are in themſelves, without the aſſiſtance of intermediate ideas; and diſcovers the moſt remote conſequences, even whilſt they are locked up in their moſt

SERM. III. moſt ſecret cauſes. Beholding, by an intuitive perception, all objects and all their properties, he needs not have recourſe to ſecondary modes of information, nor prop his judgment by the evidence of actions, which are but effects—as the heart, the ſource of theſe actions, is to him naked, and without a covering. Penetrating through the thickeſt clouds of human policy, he diſcerns by the light of his own glory, that light which renders all things viſible, the amiable qualities of a good heart, though hid from men by a veil of modeſty; whilſt he diſcovers the abominable diſpoſitions of a bad heart, though ſcreened from mortals by a maſk of hypocriſy. No darkneſs or obſtruction can conceal the moſt latent foldings of the ſoul from him, to whom the receſſes of all ſouls are manifeſt, to whom the ſecrets of all hearts are open.

The concluſion, which I draw from this argument, is this—ſince the heart is, in man, the only ſeat of religion or depravity; ſince the heart is the perpetual ſubject of the

the divine inſpection; a debauched heart must conſtitute a debauched man, as a man's life is nothing more than the picture of his heart. SERM. III.

I ſhould now proceed to ſome other conſiderations; but I have already exhauſted your time.

SERMON

SERMON IV.

Againſt the DEBAUCHERY of the HEART.

MATTHEW v. 27. 28.

—Ye have heard that it was ſaid by them of old time, thou ſhalt not commit adultery; But I ſay unto you, that whoſoever looketh upon a woman to luſt after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

I Endeavoured, in my laſt diſcourſe, to ſhew in what the debauchery of the heart conſiſts. I endeavoured alſo to ſhew, that a debauched heart is the ſame as a debauched life, in the eſtimation of the Deity— SERM. IV.

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from this conſideration, that the heart is the ſeat of virtue or of vice, and is the perpetual ſubject of the divine inſpection.

2dly. I will endeavour to ſtrengthen the proof of this doctrine by another conſideration, which is this; when once a man's heart is debauched, it is no fault of his, or rather, it is no virtue of his, if his life is not debauched. If it is not, it is owing to accident, which cannot in juſtice be imputed to him as an inſtance of virtue. A man, then, indulges an unlawful deſire, reſolves upon and ſeekes after an unlawful enjoyment; but, from ſome cauſe or other, unfortunately miſſes his aim, and ſo fortunately preſerves his character. Now I ſhould be glad to know what was the real cauſe that prevented the man from executing his intention. Was it a principle of religion? Was it a ſacred regard to the ſupremacy of heaven? Was it an awful ſenſe of the omnipreſence of God? Was it reſpect for the comlineſs of virtue? Was it abhorrence of the turpitude of vice? Was it a principle

principle of benevolence with reſpect to his Brother? Or was it a principle of conſcience with reſpect to himſelf? I anſwer, it was not a principle like any of theſe—becauſe an intention to purſue ſuch bad practices cannot poſſibly conſiſt with ſuch good principles. A principle of religion ſo ſtrong as to prevent an unlawful enjoyment, will likewiſe be ſufficiently ſtrong to prevent an unlawful reſolution. For, between an actual reſolution and an actual fact, religion, as I have already proved, knows no diſtinction. SERM. IV.

What was it then? It was a cauſe of a different complexion. Perhaps, it was want of a fair and proper opportunity. Perhaps, it was a diſappointment in the attempt. Or, laſt of all, perhaps it was a fear, that the dark deed ſome time or other, peeping forth from the dark place in which it was committed, might raiſe the tongues of men againſt him, and ſo terminate in the loſs of reputation or of life.

Now, what inference muſt we draw from

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this doctrine? Why this, that if he could have brought about the action with as much ſecrecy and as little fear, as he could cheriſh the intention, he would have done it with as little heſitation. This is a palpable proof, that the man is deſtitute of goodneſs, and void of principle—though timorous with reſpect to the judgment of men, yet audacious with reſpect to the judgment of God—though an egregious coward with regard to created impotence, yet a deſperate bully with regard to uncreated omnipotence.

3dly: That the heart, and not the life, is that upon which God lays the greateſt ſtreſs, is the current doctrine of ſcripture. The paſſages which prove this are ſo many, that we cannot mention them all—and ſo well known, that we need not mention any. Whoever is acquainted with the *bible*, is acquainted with *them*. Whoever is not, may be worſe employed than in contracting that acquaintance betimes—an acquaintance, which cannot be too ſoon begun, or too

too long continued. I will only mention two paſſages in reference to our preſent argument. SERM. IV.

1ſt: The Apoſtle Paul ſuppoſes a man to give all his goods to feed the poor, and yet, withal, to be void of charity. * The world may be blinded by the pomp of action, and, dazzled with the ſplendor of an outſide benevolence, may conceive a man to be all charity, when God, who ſees the heart, knows that he has no charity at all. No—it was a principle of oſtentation, which emptied his purſe; and his donations were intended, not ſo much to feed the appetites of the poor, as the more craving appetite of his own vanity. Now, God will judge ſuch a man according to the real vanity of his heart, and not according to the apparent charity of his conduct.

2dly: Our Saviour mentions a poor widow caſting a mite into the treaſury, and commends it as a meritorious action. †

* 1. Corinthians xiii. 3. † Luke xxi. and 2.

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God regards that as a great preſent, which the world would think but a very ſmall one. The preſent indeed was ſmall, but the heart was large. The contribution was very limited, but the benevolence was extenſive. God therefore reſpects, not the weight of the gift, but the worth of the giver; and rewards the woman, not in proportion to the amount of her offering, but in proportion to the amount of her charity.

I come now, in the third and laſt place, to conclude the diſcourſe with two exhortations. And, as I ſaid, the firſt ſhall be levelled againſt the practice of adultery. The word *adultery* neceſſarily implies, that one of the partners of the crime is the ſacred right and unalienable property of another. This one idea, excluſive of every other, abundantly demonſtrates its unlawfulneſs—becauſe the clandeſtine deprivation of another's right—the alienation of property without the conſent or forfeiture of the proprietor—is, by the declaration of every

every law, a confeſſed inſtance of robbery or theft. SERM. IV.

But this is not the only proof of its unlawfulneſs. Adultery is, in the one party at leaſt, perhaps in both parties, the actual breach of a peremptory covenant, and, in the other party, the actual conſent to and acquieſence in that enormity. Adultery makes us brutes, or rather proves that we are ſo—becauſe we indulge our animal nature at the expence of our rational. This clearly ſhews, that we are brutes in eſſence, men only in form. *

Adultery is a crime ſo odious and complicated, that it violates, at once, the laws of God, and the laws of man, the harmony of nature, and the harmony of virtue, which is nature's law. Adultery indicates the abſence of every divine and ſocial feeling—the

* What profits us, that we from heaven derive
A ſoul immortal, and with looks erect
Survey the ſtars, if, like the brutal kind,
We follow where our paſſions lead the way?

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the total extinction of humanity, benevolence, and friendſhip. For, wherever theſe heaven-deſcended principles reſide, they will eternally combat and repel the violence of every propenſity, which is in its tendency ſubverſive of the public good, and deſtructive to the rights of mankind.

Upon this principle the Apoſtle affirms, that, to a man truly benevolent and humane, you may ſafely truſt your all—* "becauſe ſuch a man will not covet, will "not ſteal, will not commit adultery." Why? The reaſon is obvious—This generous principle of love, which reigns in his boſom, and, as the Apoſtle ſays, "which "worketh no ill to his neighbour," would make him ſhrink back, with the utmoſt horror, from the remoteſt idea of giving unneceſſary pain to thoſe, who are the offſpring of the ſame parent, and fellow travellers to the ſame immortality.

Adultery not only indicates the abſence

* Romans xiii. 9. 10.

of

of every good quality, as it is inconſiſtent with that charity which is the fulfilment of the law; but it is an aſſemblage and collection of every bad one. It is the child of covetouſneſs, the offſpring of brutality, and manifeſt injuſtice—the commixture of which baſe ingredients proves the compound to be truly deteſtable. For if there is a foulneſs in each ingredient, how great muſt be the foulneſs of the compound? SERM. IV.

Adultery paves the way to conſequences fatal and ſhocking. It introduces, into families, ſhame and reproach, ſtrife and confuſion, jealouſy and diſtruſt, wretchedneſs and ruin. Adultery reduces mankind to a general uncertainty as to who is the father and who is the ſon, and this neceſſarily tends to weaken the ſtrength of parental affection, and of filial reſpect.

This, by fatal conſequence, may turn love to indifference, confidence to jealouſy, and friendſhip to ſuſpicion.

Adultery brings anxiety and remorſe of conſcience on the adulterer, in the lucid intervals

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intervals of ſerious reflection, if ever the warm purſuits of wickedneſs leave him a moment for that ſacred purpoſe—and moments of ſerious reflection the moſt abandoned muſt have. For ſays a poet, "men may live fools—but fools they connot die." * But I ſay, men cannot always live fools. For human nature, as it is now conſtituted, cannot ſuſtain the drudgeries of an inceſſant debauch, but muſt have ſome reſpite and breathing time. And, when thoſe moments of ſoberneſs and recollection come, conſcience which has long been buried in the wrecks of debauchery, like a lion rouſed from his ſlumbers, and hungry for his prey, will inſtantly begin its aſſault, preſs for admittance, and forcibly compel an audience of the ſoul. And while it diſplays the vengeance of a violated law, and the frowns of an avenging judge, it will afflict the ſoul with the deepeſt anguiſh, and pierce it through with many ſorrows.

* Young.

Adultery

Adultery adds a new ſting to calamity, gives a double darkneſs to the grave, and makes the proſpects of futurity chearleſs and deſolate. For, by an expreſs decree of the ſupreme Legiſlator, "whoremongers and "adulterers ſhall never inherit the king-"dom of heaven", * or become inhabitants of that country, where benevolence ripens to unfading maturity, purity ſhines in its brighteſt meridian, and regularity maintains an eternal empire. SERM. IV.

And is it in man, in ſpite of all this —in the face of conſcience, juſtice, honour, intereſt, hope, happineſs—to commit this daring crime? Indeed, my friends, it ought not. But, alas, how lamentable is it to reflect, that this vice is as common as it is baſe, as faſhionable as it is odious, and as much approved by the practice of ſome, as it ought to be condemned by the principles of all. But if neither conſcience, nor juſtice, nor honour, nor intereſt, nor hope,

* 1 Corinthians vi. 9. 10.

nor

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nor happineſs, will move the committers of adultery to renounce this ſhameful, abominable, and dangerous vice—what can I ſay more * * * * * * * * * *?

2dly: I proceed to the other exhortation, which, as I ſaid, ſhall be levelled againſt debauchery of heart. Since, my Brethren, a debauched heart is, before God, of the ſame criminality as a debauched life—ſince it expoſes us to the ſame puniſhments from God—let us, in obedience to the dictates of prudence, eternally renounce every inclination, inconſiſtent with religion, and reproachful to humanity. And let us cultivate that purity of heart, and that chaſtity and delicacy of ſentiment, eſſentially connected with our character, peculiarly adapted to our views.

Let us remember our high and elevated birth—that we are not the low and grovelling deſcendants of corruption, but the intelligent, the immortal offspring of God. Let not, then, the baſeneſs and degeneracy of our hearts derive diſhonour on our illuſtrious

trious origin. But let the ſublimity of our deſires ever correſpond to the ſublimity of our rank. Let us remember likewiſe, that we are profeſſors of a religion, which uniformly condemns all debauched principles. Let not, therefore, the groſſneſs and corruption of our ſentiments give the lie to our profeſſion. But let us lay the ax to the root of the tree, and for ever exterminate every propenſity, repugnant to the genius of that religion, to which we publicly expreſs an attachment; and, influenced by its ſalutary maxims, let us accuſtom ourſelves to confirmed habitudes of pure affection, elevated deſire, and refined contemplation. SERM. IV.

Laſt of all, let us remember, that though we may live like beaſts, yet we are not to die like beaſts. No—the immortal principle within ſhall ſurvive the death of the body, and exiſt in an hereafter, though diveſted of its material garments. Therefore, as we are not merely inhabitants of this world, but travellers to another, citizens of futurity, and candidates for heaven, let

SERM. IV. let no ſordid deſires, nor baſe purſuits, render our title to celeſtial enjoyments doubtful or uncertain—But let us ever cheriſh and improve, with manly fortitude, every noble, exalted, and divine affection, which may inſpire us with a reliſh for the immaculate entertainments of that better world, where no defilement enters, where no adulterer dwells, and to which no debauched heart can approach; but where purity flouriſhes, inviolable order reigns, and harmony cements the univerſal ſyſtem.

Amen.

SERMON

SERMON V.

Againſt REVENGE.

ROMANS xii. 17.

—Recompenſe to no man evil for evil—

THERE is not a chapter in the Bible more full of ſentiment, than this chapter; nor any ſentiment more full of ſenſe, than this text. It is a precept wiſely calculated to ſuppreſs the mad and furious ſpirit of revenge; a ſpirit, which reigns with uncontrouled

SERM. V. trouled predominance in the breaſts of bad men, and by its pernicious effects diſturbs the tranquillity of good men.

My deſign in handling this ſubject is to ſuggeſt,

1ſt. Some thoughts relative to revenge.

2dly. Some arguments againſt it.

3dly. Some reflections from the diſcourſe upon it.

1ſt. I am to ſuggeſt ſome thoughts relative to revenge.

Revenge is a depraved diſpoſition, or tendency of ſoul, to hurt or moleſt, in a private capacity, ſome perſon or perſons, from whom we have received an injury, either real or ſuppoſed. This diſpoſition, it is plain, has not its foundation in our rational part, and therefore muſt derive its exiſtence from the paſſions.

Now, of the paſſions, which agitate the human frame, there are two kinds. The one is planted in the ſoul by God, the other created by ourſelves. The one is natural, the other unnatural. The paſſions which are

are of God, are good, given us for wiſe purpoſes, and, when directed to proper objects, ought to be indulged. The paſſions, which are not of God, but of our own creation, are bad in themſelves, hurtful in their tendency, and ought to be rooted out. SERM. V.

This doctrine, however, may perhaps appear in a more clear and ſtriking light, if we give ſome inſtances of paſſions that are natural, and of paſſions that are unnatural. A deſire of enjoying the comforts of life, is a natural paſſion, therefore good, and ought to be encouraged. That it is natural is obvious—becauſe it is a deſire, which all men poſſeſs, and that which all men poſſeſs muſt be natural. But covetouſneſs, which is the perverſion or degeneracy of this paſſion, is unnatural, therefore bad, and ought to be checked. That it is unnatural is obvious—becauſe all men are not covetous, and that, to which all men are not addicted, is not natural. To gratify thirſt is a natural deſire, therefore good, and ought

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to be indulged. It is natural—becauſe all men are ſubject to it. But drunkenneſs, which is the perverſion or degeneracy of this paſſion, is unnatural, therefore bad, and ought to be avoided. That it is unnatural is obvious—becauſe all men are not drunkards. A deſire of eſteem is a natural paſſion, therefore good, and ought to be encouraged. That it is natural is evident—becauſe it is a deſire common to all. But pride, which is the perverſion or degeneracy of this paſſion, is unnatural, therefore bad, and ought to be deſtroyed. That pride is unnatural is obvious—becauſe all men are not proud. Emulation, or a deſire to excel in what is laudable, is a natural paſſion, therefore good, and ought to be cheriſhed. It is natural—becauſe all men poſſeſs it. But envy, which is the perverſion or degeneracy of this paſſion, is unnatural, therefore bad, and ought to be extirpated. That it is unnatural is obvious—becauſe all men are not envious.

Hence it follows, that evil is nothing elſe

elſe but the perverſion of good, is not there- SERM. V.
fore created by God, but owes its exiſtence to ourſelves. I have mentioned theſe ſeveral inſtances of paſſions, and their reſpective depravities, on purpoſe to illuſtrate the point in hand.

Anger, then, is a paſſion natural to man; a paſſion given him for wiſe and proper purpoſes, and therefore, when directed to proper objects, ought to be indulged. But revenge, which is the perverſion or corruption of this paſſion, is unnatural, therefore bad, and ought to be repreſſed. It is obſervable, that the proper object of anger is vice, but the proper object of revenge is man. This is a ſufficient proof, that the paſſion is perverted—becauſe it transfers the hatred due to the vice, to the man to whom it is not due. For though vice, as ſuch, is the proper object of hatred, yet man (however hateful the conduct of ſome men may be) can never, as man, be the object of hatred.

There are inſtances of depravity which

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naturally call forth anger, in which inſtances the ſuppreſſion of it would be a proof rather of inſenſibility than of virtue. But there is not any inſtance of depravity which ſhould call forth revenge, becauſe revenge is always a proof of a depraved mind. To proſecute a malefactor, and to inflict a puniſhment upon him, proportioned to his villainy, is commendable, provided the motive, which prompts us to it, is public ſpirit, not private reſentment. But if private reſentment is the cauſe, the puniſhment may be juſt—but the motive is cenſurable. The truth is, every paſſion that is natural, as I have ſaid, when directed to proper objects, may be indulged; but revenge is eſſentially and eternally evil, and ſhould therefore be eternally ſuppreſſed. There is in it ſuch an inherent malignity, that no pretence can ever juſtify it.

2dly. I proceed to offer ſome arguments againſt revenge; and, of the great number that might be mentioned, I ſhall confine myſelf to four.

1ſt

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1ſt. It is a proof of a baſe and low mind.

2dly. It is repugnant to religion.

3dly. It produces uneaſineſs of mind in this world.

4thly. It lays a ſure foundation of greater uneaſineſs in the next.

1ſt. Revenge is a proof of a baſe and low mind. True greatneſs of ſoul is an object of the moſt laudable ambition, a divine quality, which every man of a juſt way of thinking would wiſh to poſſeſs. But do not miſtake me: there is a mighty difference between a great mind, and what the world calls a great man. Alas! There is many a pitiful wretch adorned with a ſplendid coat, and many a brave ſpirit covered with rags. This world is a chequered ſcene, where the ſtreams of good and evil flow promiſcuouſly. A man is never truly great, till once he is ſuperior to the greatneſs which he poſſeſſes. A man is never truly little, till he thinks himſelf great. For, believe it, the moſt contemptible figure, which this earth exhibits, is a weak and worthleſs

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SERM. V. mortal, puffed and blown up with ſwelling ideas of his own ſignificancy. Therefore, the advice of Parmenio, the grecian general, to his ſon, a young man poſſeſſed of a ſufficient ſtock of ſelf-importance, was worthy of him to give, and worthy of every man of ſenſe to adopt—"My ſon, ſays he, "would you be great? You muſt be leſs" —that is, you muſt be leſs in your own eyes, if you would be great in the eyes of other men.

True greatneſs of mind, my brethren, does not conſiſt in inſolence to thoſe above us, nor in contempt of thoſe below us—No —but in a juſt regard for what is worthy, a juſt diſlike to what is trifling, a juſt approbation of what is virtuous, and a juſt deteſtation of what is vicious. This is a greatneſs, to which every other greatneſs muſt own ſubjection. This is a ſterling nobility of ſoul, which far tranſcends the nominal nobility of blood, and, by its ſuperior brightneſs, far outſhines the artificial glare of vanity and pride. It is not in every man's

man's power, to be the proprietor of a great eſtate; but it is in every man's power to be ſomething more—to be the proprietor of a great mind; a mind, that will raiſe him ſuperior to all the glittering titles and fopperies of life. The conſequence is this—whatever tends to promote this greatneſs of ſoul, ought to be cultivated with unwearied attention; and whatever tends to impair it, ought to be erazed from the heart, and blotted out for ever. SER M. V.

Now, revenge is directly the reverſe of this greatneſs of ſoul, and is conſequently a proof of a ſoul baſe and grovelling. * To forgive an injury is the ſtrongeſt proof of a great mind, becauſe ſuch forgiveneſs ſuppoſes a fortitude and firmneſs of ſoul, which no accident can move, a calmneſs and compoſure which no ſtorm can ruffle, a generoſity of ſentiment and conſcious worth to which a weak mind is an eternal ſtranger.

* —Revenge, which ſtill we find
The weakeſt frailty of a feeble mind.
JUVENAL.

SERM. V. As the forgiveneſs of injuries is the ſtrongeſt proof of a great mind, ſo it will follow that revenge, which is the reverſe of forgiveneſs, is a proof equally ſtrong of a mind that is baſe and mean—becauſe revenge ſuppoſes the abſence of all thoſe ſublime qualities which forgiveneſs implies, and the preſence of all thoſe low qualities which forgiveneſs deteſts.

Revenge is a temper of mind low and abject; low as the duſt, and abject as ſlavery. Revenge is a temper of mind black and ſullen; black as hell, and ſullen as its priſoners. Revenge is a temper of mind ſavage and inhuman: let a man but abandon himſelf to its furious impulſe, and the foreſt cannot produce ſo great a monſter.

Revenge in one word (for it is painful to dwell on ſo baſe a ſubject) is the very temper of hell, and the very ſpirit of its tyrant. What pity is it then, my friends, that man, who is ſtamped with the image of his Maker, and formed for generous and elevated ſentiments, ſhould ever wear this image

image of the Devil, or harbour a temper ſo unlike his original! SERM. V.

2dly. The ſpirit of revenge is repugnant to the ſpirit of religion. Of all human concerns, religion is the moſt important, and lies neareſt to the ſoul of man, becauſe from it reſult the pleaſures of life, the conſolations of death, and the joys of eternity. Whatever tends, therefore, to the deſtruction of that, on which our all, our eternal all depends, we muſt regard as our mortal foe, the deſtroyer of our peace, and the murderer of our ſoul. The bloody aſſaſſin who plunges his dagger in our boſom, is not an enemy ſo dangerous.

That the vice, which we now combat, has this fatal tendency, a few moments of impartial reflection will irrefragably prove. The grand foundation upon which all true religion is built, the grand hinge on which it turns, the grand point in which it terminates, is love; but hatred is the principle which actuates revenge. As oppoſite, therefore, as love, the foundation of religion, is

to

SERM. V. to hatred, the foundation of revenge, ſo oppoſite is revenge, which is founded upon hatred, to religion, which is founded upon love. As ſoon may the ſhades of night and the rays of the ſun meet together, or the two extremes of a contradiction agree, as the ſpirit of revenge correſpond with the ſpirit of religion.

The religion, which we profeſs, forbids revenge on the ſevereſt penalty, and threatens it with the tremendous indignation of the Almighty. It commands us to love our enemies—not indeed with a love of affection—for that is impoſſible—but with a love of kindneſs and good will—a love, which will prompt us to give them meat when they are hungry, or drink when they are thirſty, to bleſs them when they curſe us, and to pray for them when they perſecute us. It enjoins, by the moſt forcible motives, the forgiveneſs of injuries; a forgiveneſs indeed, not flowing from a natural ſimplicity of head, or a ſtupid inſenſibility of heart, but a forgiveneſs connected with

with prudence, and iſſuing from a great- SERM
neſs and generoſity of ſoul ſuperior to the V.
malice of the baſe. Nay, it goes even ſo far, as to make our forgiving the injuries of men the very condition of our receiving forgiveneſs from God: for, ſays our Saviour, "if ye forgive men their treſpaſſes, "your heavenly Father will forgive you "your treſpaſſes; but if ye forgive not "men their treſpaſſes, neither will your "heavenly Father forgive you your treſ- "paſſes." *

Now, will any man, in the face of this plain declaration, have the aſſurance to pretend that he is a chriſtian, while he cheriſhes in his boſom the unchriſtian ſpirit of revenge? As well may you extract life from the grave, or virtue from hell, as make a chriſtian and a revengeful ſpirit take up their habitation in the ſame boſom.

Revenge is oppoſite to the nature of God, and we know that all true religion is foun-

* Matthew vi, 14. 15.

ded

SERM. V. ded upon the exiſtence and attributes of God. "God is love, and they that dwell "in love, dwell in God, and God in them." The Devil is hatred, and they that dwell in hatred, dwell in the Devil, and the Devil in them.

Were God a vindictive and revengeful Being, he would give inceſſant proofs of his reſentment to mankind, and would pour the bittereſt drops of the bittereſt miſery into the cup of wretched mortals. But this is man's happineſs, that "Judgment "with God is a ſtrange work, and mer-"cy his darling attribute." His amiable character is this—"long ſuffering and ſlow "to wrath, full of compaſſion and ready "to forgive."

Every new moment brings us new proofs, that this character of God is juſt. For, inſtead of ſhowering down ſtorms of vengeance on the heads of guilty mortals, he cauſes the refreſhing rain of heaven to water the fields of the unjuſt, as well as of the juſt. Inſtead of ſhutting up, in the blackneſs

blackneſs of darkneſs for ever, the rebel- SERM V.
lious ſubjects of his throne, he cauſes the light of heaven to viſit them, and makes his ſun to riſe on the evil, as well as on the good. Thus he exhibits, to the ſons of men, the moſt amiable pattern of the moſt amiable virtue. Now, can any man pretend to be like to God, while he is revengeful? Or can any man pretend to be religious, while he is unlike to God? Impudence itſelf would bluſh at ſuch preſumption.

Revenge is oppoſite to the example of Chriſt, and the example of Chriſt is the beſt model for chriſtian practice. What was it that engaged our Saviour to deſcend from heaven? It was love. What was it that induced our Saviour to ſubmit to poverty, reproach, and perſecution? It was love. What was it that cauſed our Saviour to endure the ignominy and torment of the croſs? It was love. His life and death breathed forth nothing but gentleneſs and clemency. "And this pattern he left us, "that we might follow his ſteps."

Had

SERM. V.

Had our Saviour been of a cruel and reſentful temper, he would have blaſted, like the fig-tree, each preſumptuous tranſgreſſor, and given a mortifying check to the inſolence of men; but more mild and gentle ſentiments flowed from his mild and gentle boſom. "For when he ſuffered, he threat-"ned not; and when he was reviled, he "reviled not again: —He gave his back to "the ſmiters; and as a ſheep before her "ſhearers is dumb, ſo he opened not his "mouth." And even at laſt, when the concluſion of the tragic ſcene approached, inſtead of calling to heaven for inſtant thunder to conſume his enemies, with a divine meekneſs and charity he offers up to God a moſt fervent prayer in their behalf, devoutly beſeeches his Father to forgive them, and pleads their ignorance as their excuſe—"Father, forgive them! for they "know not what they do." Mild and gentle Saviour! How does thy ſweet, forgiving temper upbraid the harſh and impatient ſpirit of revenge, and give, to the native

native comlineſs of clemency and love, as beauty and luſtre before unſeen by mortals! SERM. V.

Let men, who have no regard for their ſouls, deſpiſe religion; let men, who have no regard for religion, deſpiſe their ſouls: but far be it from the heart of any man, who calls himſelf a chriſtian, to harbour in his boſom a temper, which his religion condemns—to harbour in his boſom a temper, which deſtroys his religion.

I ſhould now proceed to the third argument; but your time is gone.

SERMON

SERMON VI.

Againſt REVENGE.

ROMANS xii. 17.

—Recompenſe to no man evil for evil—

THE two firſt arguments againſt revenge I finiſhed in a former diſcourſe. SERM. VI.

I proceed now to the third argument againſt revenge, which is, that it brings uneaſineſs of mind on the revengeful man in this world.

SERM. VI. Serenity of mind is a moſt deſireable bleſſing; yea, the moſt ſolid comfort which man enjoys on earth. Poſſeſſed of this, the ſoul can extract the ſweets of contentment from the moſt ungrateful objects: deprived of this, it can find no reliſh in the moſt delightful. Poſſeſſed of this, the ſoul can wear a ſmile in the deepeſt gloom of life; and fortified within its own tranquillity, can bid defiance to ſurrounding ſtorms. *

Peace in the mind, like health in the body, unites its qualities in their proper harmony, reduces its powers to their natural firmneſs, and gives it the full poſſeſſion of itſelf—a poſſeſſion of itſelf, which renders it calm in the midſt of diſturbance, and unmoved

* He that has light within his own clear breaſt
May ſit i'the center, and enjoy bright day:
But he that hides a dark ſoul, and foul thoughts,
Benighted walks under the mid-day ſun;
Himſelf is his own dungeon.

MILTON.

unmoved like a rock, while the billows of misfortune roll over its head. SERM. VI.

Tranquillity of ſoul is a prize ſo vaſt, that no man can eſtimate its worth, but he who poſſeſſes it; and he who poſſeſſes it, knows its worth ſo well, that he would not exchange it for the richeſt treaſures in the world—becauſe it imparts to him thoſe ſolid conſolations, which the world can neither give, nor take away—thoſe ſolid conſolations, which no peril or diſtreſs can baniſh from him, becauſe he can never be baniſhed from himſelf.

Now, that which diſplays revenge in the moſt odious colours, and exhibits it to the eyes of mortals, as an object of the utmoſt horror, is this, that this unfriendly temper, this diabolical ſpirit of revenge, (which ſprings from hell, is matured on earth, and when matured, returns again to hell, its native and proper habitation) diſſipates this internal ſerenity of mind, and with a rude and daring violence, blaſts that inward peace, which is the eſſence of felicity—

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whilſt it nouriſhes the noxious ſeeds of hatred, and foſters that rancour, which is the fountain of diſtreſs.

From acts of love, generoſity and kindneſs, invariably reſult ſatisfaction, complacency, and ſelf-enjoyment; becauſe they are of divine extraction, and congenial to the ſoul; and as they are reſemblances of the Creator's conduct, ſo are they, alſo, proportionable reſemblances of the Creator's bleſſedneſs. But from acts of malice, and revenge, eternally ſpring diſorder, tumult, and ſelf-deteſtation, becauſe theſe diſpoſitions are of ſuch a poiſonous quality, that they corrupt the ſoul, and put all its faculties in a poſture of hoſtility.

Revenge is a propenſity ſo turbulent, that it cannot lie ſtill, nor with the theory of miſchief reſt contented, but inceſſantly tends to exertion, and graſps at opportunities of diſcharging its fury. It bears down reaſon like an impetuous torrent, and precipitates men headlong into actions the moſt deformed and dangerous—actions againſt honour

our and juſtice, civility and friendſhip, benevolence and pity, intereſt and ſafety. Working, thus, with reſtleſs ferment, it never fails to grate and feed upon the ſoul, which harbours it. Planting, thus, its thorns and daggers in the heart, it makes the man, over whom it tyrannizes, as completely miſerable, as his moſt envenomed malice could wiſh his enemy to be. SERM. VI.

Revenge violently pulls the ſoul of its hinges, throws open the floodgates of confuſion, and finally completes the ſyſtem of wretchedneſs. It is a war where there is no peace, a night where there is no day, a ſtorm where there is no calm. It diſcompoſes the features of the mind, deſtroys tranquillity of heart, diſconcerts the operations of conſcience, obſtructs the exerciſe of benevolence, eradicates the feelings of humanity, and introduces the habits of ill-nature, malice, and perverſeneſs. Theſe ungracious habits invariably lead to acts of hoſtility and vengeance, and pave the way to cruelty, barbarity, and bloodſhed. Theſe

SERM. VI. ever inſpire a conſciouſneſs of deſerved hatred, and ever terminate in a pungent and laſting remorſe.

Such are the fruits of revenge. * * * * * *

But as there is no maxim ſo ridiculous but ſome fool will adopt it, ſo ſome fool will tell you, that, notwithſtanding all this, there is a pleaſure in revenge.

Grant it; but God knows, and the poor wretch himſelf knows, what an empty, fleeting, worthleſs, miſerable pleaſure it is—a pleaſure, whoſe birth is all reſtleſſneſs, whoſe enjoyment is all tumult, whoſe conſequence is all remorſe. If this is pleaſure, tell me, common ſenſe! what is pain.

What a frightful picture of that horror and remorſe, which are the conſequence of revenge, does the hiſtory of Cain exhibit! That unhappy man, when with a cruel hand, and a crueler heart, he had ſhed the blood of his innocent and offenceleſs Brother, conſcience ſmote. His heart, in ſpite of all its cruelty, recoiled upon itſelf. His imagination,

imagination, in ſtrongeſt colours, painted before him the horrors of his guilt, and made him cry out in agony of ſoul, "My "puniſhment is greater than I can bear; "behold, every one that finds me, ſhall "ſlay me" *—a natural and ſtriking image of that wretchedneſs, which is inſeparable from guilt. SERM. VI.

And indeed, my Friends, could we diſſect a ſoul, when rankled with malice, and bent upon revenge; could we ſee, at that moment, the ſwellings and boilings of the heart, the agitation and ferment of the ſpirits; we ſhould rather pity its wretchedneſs, than dread its malignity. Or, could we explore the receſſes of a ſoul, when revenge has had its full effect; could we, at that moment, ſee the deep affliction and anguiſh of the heart, the horrors of remorſe which diſtract the conſcience, and thoſe ghoſts and furies which for ever haunt revengeful men, and terrify them with the fearful bodings of impending puniſhment;

* Geneſis iv. 13, 14.

SERM. VI. we ſhould inſtantly fly into the habitations of peace and ſerenity, as a happy refuge from the tumults of revenge, and the ſtings of remorſe.

4thly. Revenge lays a ſure foundation of greater uneaſineſs in the next world.

Future puniſhment is, of all evils, the moſt dreadful, and therefore, of all evils, is the moſt to be avoided. The calamities, which mortals inherit in their earthly tabernacle, are ſlight and tranſitory—ſoon fly off, and die for ever. But thoſe woes, which feſter in the ſouls of bad men after death, are at once intolerable and interminable. Their exquiſite acuteneſs can only be equalled by their endleſs duration. At that awful period, when theſe woes commence, the ſons of vice muſt take up their abode in the diſmal habitations of darkneſs and deſpair, in which reſide only Demons, and the ſpirits of malevolent men. They muſt make their bed in hell; a dreadful bed indeed! where reſt comes neither day nor night, where the voice of gladneſs is never heard, where peace and joy can never enter; "but the "ſmoke

" ſmoke of their torments aſcendeth for " ever and ever"; where the ſoul is ever forced upwards by the deſire of happineſs, but is ever preſſed downwards by the weight of iniquity: whilſt this melancholy reflection ever preys upon the heart—All the treaſures of celeſtial felicity might have been mine, had not my own obſtinate wickedneſs barred againſt me the gates of heaven. There the worm of conſcience never dies, and the fire of appetite is never quenched. There the tears of grief are never baniſhed from the eye, nor the heavings of ſorrow from the heart. There the underſtanding, like a condemned criminal, is ſhut up in a dark dungeon, to brood for ever on its own calamity. There the paſſions burn with unquenchable deſire, and are perpetually racked with deſpair of enjoyment. There the memory ſerves as a cruel engine, to rake up the aſhes of guilty deeds, to overwhelm the ſoul in an abyſs of ſorrow—whilſt remorſe, like a gnawing vulture, feeds upon the ſoul. There are wounds

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SERM. VI. wounds without balm, pains without eaſe, diſtreſs without relief, afflictions without pity, ſufferings without limit, and anxiety without interval.

All this might yet be born, did ever hope, that ſweet cordial of calamity, break through the ſullen gloom, and with the fair proſpects of deliverance, chear the wretched ſufferer. But alas! alas! There even hope, the laſt refuge of unhappy minds, is for ever excluded, and nothing preſents itſelf but the gloom of deſpair, and the blackneſs of darkneſs for ever and ever. * Juſt God! how wretched is the ſituation of thy creatures,

* Some Divines of the firſt claſs are of opinion, that though eternal puniſhments are threatened in ſcripture, yet they will not be inflicted. The ground, upon which they build their opinion, is this—Betwixt a promiſe and a threatening there is a material diſtinction. A promiſe, ſay they, conveys a right to the perſon whom the promiſe reſpects; and, conſequently, lays an obligation upon the perſon, who promiſes, to put the perſon, to whom the promiſe is made, in the actual poſſeſſion of the benefits which the promiſe includes. But a threatening conveys no right to the perſon, againſt whom the threatening is

tures, when they deſert thee, the fountain of life; violate the laws of thy government, and wilfully purſue their own deſtruction! SERM. VI.

Now revenge infallibly leads to theſe dark apartments of unpitied and unending wretchedneſs. Therefore, were there no other argument againſt it, this, one would think,

is denounced; and, of conſequence, lays no obligation upon the perſon, who threatens, to inflict the puniſhment which the threatening implies. Hence it follows, that he, who threatens, reſerves the power of execution to himſelf, and may exert it or not as he ſees proper. From this it is concluded, that, as mercy is the darling attribute of God, ſo the threatenings of eternal puniſhment will not be executed. This argument, I confeſs, appears to be philoſophical enough. But even upon ſuppoſition of its truth, which no man can fully aſcertain, I queſtion how far the publication of it is conſiſtent with prudence. When God threatens, he either means to execute the threatening, or he means the threatening as a bulwark of government. If the firſt, it is moſt imprudent to make tranſgreſſors believe that they ſhall eſcape puniſhment, which it is certain they ſhall not eſcape; if the ſecond, it is moſt imprudent to relax the ſanctions of the divine government. For if men offend God with ſo little reluctance notwithſtanding the fear of hell, with how much leſs reluctance will they offend him, when the fear of hell is eternally removed?

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think, might be ſufficient to ſuppreſs it, and blaſt its influence for ever. God, who is truth itſelf, has declared, "that malicious "and revengeful men ſhall never inherit "the kingdom of heaven." And though God had with-held this intimation, the common principles of reaſon would ſuggeſt it.

Revenge muſt baniſh the ſoul from the God of heaven. For what correſpondence, I beſeech you, can exiſt between a ſoul, all darkneſs, and a God, all light? What correſpondence can exiſt between a ſoul, all hatred, and a God, all love?

Revenge muſt baniſh the ſoul from the inhabitants of heaven. The inhabitants of heaven are all kind, friendly, and benevolent. But what connection can be eſtabliſhed between ſpirits generous and enlarged, and ſpirits full of malevolence and fury?

Revenge muſt baniſh the ſoul from the enjoyments of heaven. All the enjoyments of heaven have their ſource in love. All ſpring from that ſpirit of univerſal benevolence,

benevolence, which inceſſantly circulates through the whole ſociety. But how can a ſoul, deſtitute of love, reliſh thoſe delights which reſult from love? SERM. VI.

Heaven is not a ſoil where revenge will grow. Place a revengeful man in the midſt of heaven,—he would be out of his element. Diſplay before him all its glories —he would remain inſenſible of their influence. And finding no object from without, on which to vent the wormwood and venom of his ſoul, his revenge would turn inwards, and prey upon himſelf. Thus, in the midſt of ſurrounding felicities, the man would prove his own tormentor.

The truth of God has alſo ſaid, "that "malicious and revengeful men ſhall in-"herit the kingdom of hell as their final "portion." What deſtination can be ſo proper? Revenge, as I have ſaid, is the temper of the Devil. The Devil, therefore, is the revengeful man's proper companion. Revenge, as I have ſaid, is the temper of hell. Hell, therefore, is its proper habitation.

SERM. VI. tion. In hell, the perpetual circulation of ill offices, will afford perpetual opportunities for revenge to exert itſelf. This demonſtrates the infallible connection between the habitation, and the inhabitant. In ſhort, whether you conſider the expreſs threatening of God, or the eſſential malignity of the revengeful ſpirit, you will be forced to adopt this concluſion, that when the revengeful man departs from earth, he will be admitted to no country but hell; he will be allowed to incorporate with no ſociety but Devils.

3dly. I will conclude the diſcourſe with ſome reflections. Let us, my Friends, calmly conſider, for a moment, what revenge is—how baſe and diſhonorable, how full of wretchedneſs, how full of danger: and let theſe ideas, ſo injurious to our honour and felicity, inſpire us with a juſt and laſting indignation againſt it. Let us conſider what we ourſelves are—men—chriſtians—immortals. Let us reflect how indecent it is to transform the image of God into

into the image of the Devil. Let us reflect how unnatural it is for thoſe who are born men to live like tygers, for profeſſed chriſtians to be real pagans, for the heirs of immortality to act as if death were the final boundary of their exiſtence. Let us conſider the intimate affinity which ſubſiſts among us. We are all children of the ſame father, inhabitants of the ſame earth, ſubjects of the ſame empire, profeſſors of the ſame religion, heirs of the ſame hopes, citizens of the ſame privileges, and fellow-travellers to the ſame immortality. Linked together therefore, as we are, by the ſtrongeſt ties of blood, ſituation, religion, hope, let us throw down the weapons of hoſtility, eſſential to foes; and put on the ſpirit of kindneſs, eſſential to friends. As we are brethren, like brethren let us dwell in unity. As we are bound for the ſame country, let us not fall out by the way. But let us baniſh from our hearts each unbrotherly ſentiment, and cultivate in our boſoms each tender emotion of love, benevolence, and friendſhip. SERM. VI.

By

SERM. VI

By this ſhall we imitate the conduct of God, who is good and benevolent—who is goodneſs and benevolence itſelf. By this ſhall we imitate the conduct of Chriſt, who went about for ever doing good, and diffuſing happineſs. By this ſhall we enjoy thoſe delights, which ſpring from a mind at eaſe—a mind, unruffled by any ſtorm. And by this ſhall we find, at laſt, from the delights of peace on earth, a ſweet and eaſy paſſage to the more elevated delights of heaven; that glorious and bliſsful region, from which revenge and revengeful men will be for ever excluded,—where tranquillity eſtabliſhes her unmoleſted habitation, where friendſhip increaſes in eternal progreſſion, and happineſs reigns without interruption. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON VII.

Againſt IDOLATRY.

EXODUS xx. 4. 5. 6.

Thou ſhalt not make unto thee any graven image, or the likeneſs of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou ſhalt not bow down thyſelf to them, nor ſerve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, viſiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and ſhewing mercy unto thouſands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

THE text ſtrikes againſt Idolatry, and is intended to deſtroy it. The command- ment points out its offenſiveneſs to God; SERM. VII.

SERM. VII. the threatning intimates its danger to man. But, from an unfair interpretation of this paſſage, ſuch doctrines have been formed, and ſuch concluſions drawn, as are injurious to the character of the deity, and ſhocking to the ſentiments of mankind. Juſt information, therefore, upon this ſubject muſt be matter of moment to candid minds. And to vindicate the government of God from being, what ſome interpreters would have it, an arbitrary and capricious conſtitution, and religion from being a dark and malancholy ſyſtem, the following obſervations are humbly offered to your ſerious peruſal.

To clear up the ſuppoſed darkneſs of the text, I will

1ſt. Make ſome general remarks upon it.

2dly. Particularly apply myſelf to the threatening in it.

3dly. Conſider the folly of Idolatry.

4thly. Conclude with ſome reflections.

1ſt. I am to make ſome general remarks or obſervations.

Obſervation

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Obſervation 1ſt. Let it be remarked, that God, as ſovereign Creator, has an inconteſtable right to ſettle the external ſituation of his creatures, provided their final happineſs be the ultimate object of that ſettlement. For though it muſt be acknowledged, that the right, which God has in his creatures, is in exact proportion to the number and greatneſs of the favours which he has conferred upon them—So that it muſt ever be repugnant to the nature of God, to form any creature for miſery,—or ever to inflict miſery upon it, except that miſery is the deſert of its own miſconduct—in which caſe, it is nothing more than a proper chaſtiſement for improper action—Yet it muſt alſo be acknowledged, that, when happineſs is the final view of all God's diſpenſations, he has an undoubted title to fix the outward circumſtances of all beings in this or any other world—conſidered not as a final, but introductory ſyſtem, an eſſential preliminary to another. And upon this principle it was, that God elected the nation of the Jews.

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Obſervation 2d. Let it be remarked, that God acted towards the Jews in a peculiar capacity. He departed, as it were, from his original character, as univerſal Governor and ſupreme Lord, and condeſcended to act towards them, under the character of a temporal prince. In Judæa, he erected a kingdom, and dignified its inhabitants with important privileges, which he denied to the ſurrounding nations.

Obſervation 3d. God, like a wiſe and good law-giver, not only promulgated wiſe and good laws, but alſo fenced them, and inforced the obſervance of them by proper ſanctions—that is, by an exhibition of rewards of puniſhments. For as laws are the nerves and ſinews of a government, ſo rewards and puniſhments are the nerves and ſinews of the laws. A law naked and unarmed, however good, is weak and impotent, and rather ſeems to beg than to command.

Obſervation 4th. Thoſe ſanctions, by which God intended to ſecure obedience to his

his laws, though ſtrong and forcible, yet, ſuitable to the idea of his acting as a temporal Governor, were all temporal. And hence the Apoſtle calls it a law of carnal commandment. SERM. VII.

Obſervation 5th. The precepts of the moral law, ſo far as they are moral precepts, are of univerſal and everlaſting obligation. Moral law is the very tranſcript of God's moral nature, and therefore muſt be an invariable ſtandard of conduct to all beings capable of law—that is, to all intelligent and accountable beings, in whatever country they are born, to whatever ſociety they belong, whatever public form of worſhip they profeſs.

But the ten commandments, as delivered by Moſes, have in them many things not moral, and conſequently not obligatory upon men conſidered as rational beings, but upon men only conſidered as members of the Jewiſh Common-wealth, which the publication of theſe commandments peculiarly reſpected.

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Thus the fourth commandment—"remember the ſabbath day, to keep it holy"—is expreſsly moral, becauſe delivered by the Creator, when pure Deiſm was the religion, that is, before the inſtitution either of Judaiſm or Chriſtianity—and conſequently binding upon all men as rational beings, to whom the knowledge of that law ſhould be communicated. But the profound reſt, enjoined to man and beaſt, peculiarly reſpected the Jewiſh Æconomy.

Thus the fifth commandment—"Honour thy father and thy mother"—is a commandment expreſsly moral, and ſo binding upon all men, as rational beings. But the ſequel—"that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee"—is expreſsly Jewiſh. God promiſed the land of Canaan to the Jews; but he made no promiſe of a land to any other people. To reſpectful and obedient children in that land, he promiſed long life. But he made no ſuch promiſe to any but the inhabitants of that land. Hence it is evident,

dent, that this part of the commandment is wholly Jewiſh. SERM. VII.

And thus the ſecond commandment —"Thou ſhalt not make unto thee any gra- "ven image, or the likeneſs of any thing "in heaven above, or in the earth beneath; "thou ſhalt not bow down thyſelf to "them, nor worſhip them"—is a commandment expreſsly moral, and ſo binding upon men, as rational beings. But the remaining clauſe "for I, the Lord thy God, "am a jealous God, viſiting the iniquities "of the fathers upon their children, to the "third and fourth generation"—is expreſsly Jewiſh, as I ſhall have occaſion to ſhew more fully afterwards.

Obſervation 6th. The great error, to which the Jews were addicted, was Idolatry. Notwithſtanding the cleareſt proofs of God's exiſtence, unity, unrivalled excellence, and ſupreme authority — notwithſtanding the peculiar regard, which God had expreſſed for them — notwithſtanding the repeated obligations, which he had laid upon them—

SERM. VII. ſtill that inflexible perverſeneſs of temper, for which they were remarkable, inclined them to revolt.

Obſervation 7th. and laſt. In order to ſuppreſs this ſpirit of Idolatry which raged in them, God made uſe of every wiſe and proper mean, and eſpecially of that threatening in the text, of viſiting the iniquities of the fathers upon their children.

Having now premiſed theſe remarks, which I thought neceſſary for opening up the true ſenſe of the paſſage, I proceed to conſider more particularly the threatening in the text, of viſiting the iniquities of the fathers upon their children. From the obſervations already made it occurs, in the firſt place, that the puniſhment included in this threatening is temporal. 2dly: That it ſtands in immediate connection with Idolatry. 3dly: That it ſtands in immediate relation to the Jews. The conſequence is, that this threatening cannot, with any face of reaſon, be ſuppoſed to extend to men's ſpiritual and eternal ſtate, nor be executed for

for any crime but idolatry, nor upon any man but a Jew. SERM. VII.

But that you may comprehend the full meaning of the paſſage, and clearly ſee that there is no unrighteouſneſs with God, be pleaſed to obſerve theſe four things.

1ſt. The nature of the puniſhment.

2dly. The propriety of it.

3dly. The goodneſs of it.

4thly. The juſtice of it.

1ſt. Let us conſider the nature of the puniſhment. Though the nature of the puniſhment here threatened is not particularly ſpecified, yet it is eaſy to collect it from the nature of good government. In the Jewiſh Government then, that is, under the government of God, conſidered as their temporal Monarch, there were, as in every well-conſtituted government, many places of truſt, various offices of importance, civil, military, eccleſiaſtic. With a capacity of enjoying theſe offices every loyal ſubject was inveſted by his birth. But as ſoon as any man became an Idolater, that is, a diſ-

loyal

SERM. VII. loyal ſubject and diſaffected to government, he that moment forfeited, not only the offices which he held, if he held any, but alſo the very capacity of holding offices under that government for ever. Nor was this all. The children of ſuch diſaffected and idolatrous ſubjects were, likewiſe, denied the capacity of enjoying offices of truſt in that conſtitution, for three or four generations, that is, as long as the ſeeds of rebellion and idolatry might be ſuppoſed to exiſt.

2dly. Let us conſider the propriety of this threatening and puniſhment. It is plain beyond diſpute, that every wiſe and good governor, who conſults the happineſs of the ſtate which he regulates, muſt, in order to ſecure its ſafety, commit the public offices of ſtate to ſuch only as are its profeſſed and avowed friends; for, if offices of importance are intruſted to the enemies of government, it is eaſy to foretell, without the ſpirit of devination, that ſuch imprudent conduct muſt infallibly bring on its immediate

ate deſtruction. For when men, whoſe minds are hoſtile and unfriendly to a ſtate, are employed in council, or engaged in the field, they will naturally betray it into the hands of foes, and finally effectuate its fall. To debar, therefore, all idolatrous, that is, all rebellious ſubjects, and all their children, from thoſe privileges and benefits which are connected with loyalty, as long as the ſpirit of rebellion might be ſuppoſed to continue, was a diſpenſation undoubtedly founded on the trueſt principles of wiſdom and propriety. SERM. VII.

The wiſdom of this conduct has ſo recommended itſelf to the common ſenſe of mankind, that every good government, ſince that period, has adopted the ſame principle, and acted upon the ſame plan—that is, debars from public offices and privileges, not only rebels, but alſo their children, till ſuch time as theſe children ſhall give ſufficient evidence of their reformation.

3dly. Let us conſider the goodneſs of this

SERM. VII. this puniſhment and this threatening. It is good for the parent, as far as it is a threatening: it is good for the children, as far as the threatening takes effect.

1ſt. As far as it is a threatening, it is good for the parent. The ultimate object of threatening is not to promote, but to prevent puniſhment. When a law-giver annexes a particular puniſhment to a particular crime, it is not his intention, by this conduct, to draw the unwary ſubject into guilt, and then to puniſh him for being guilty. But his deſign is, by the influence of the threatening, to prevent the crime, and, by this means, to prevent the puniſhment. Hence it follows, that the greater any threatening is, the greater is the goodneſs of the law-giver, becauſe ſuch threatening does not proceed from a malevolent, but a merciful intention. The goodneſs of God therefore, acting as the Jewiſh Lawgiver, is abundantly manifeſt in threatening to puniſh the revolt and idolatry of parents, not only in their own ſufferings, but alſo in

in the ſufferings of their poſterity—be- SERM. VII.
cauſe this was a ſtrong additional motive, to keep them ſteadfaſt to their duty, and of conſequence ſteadfaſt to their happineſs.

2dly. As far as the threatening takes effect, it is good for the children. In a good government, ſuch as the government of God is acknowledged to be, the greateſt happineſs of the ſubject, as ſuch, is to be ſatisfied with that government; and, of courſe, the greateſt miſery of the ſubject, as ſuch, is to be diſſatisfied with that government.

Now, when a parent poſſeſſes rebellious and diſloyal ſentiments, his children are moſt likely to poſſeſs ſentiments of the ſame complexion. Not that parents infuſe, into the minds of their children, rebellious and malignant principles—by no means—but becauſe children, when their minds, like wax, are ſoft and impreſſible, and ſo may be caſt into any form, are moſt apt to follow the inſtructions, and imitate the examples of their parents, with whom they are moſt fami-

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familiarly converſant, and under whoſe authority they long remain.

If therefore children, into whoſe tender minds the ſeeds of rebellion have been caſt, and who have been nurſed and trained up in theſe deteſtable and deſtructive principles, were admitted, notwithſtanding ſuch education, to thoſe privileges which are annexed to loyalty, there would be nothing to prevent the growth and ſpread of rebellion in a ſtate, nor, of conſequence, the growth and ſpread of proportionable miſery. Nay, diſloyalty, and unhappineſs its inſeparable companion, would grow up and flouriſh, even under the ſanction of government itſelf.

It was, therefore, an undeniable inſtance of goodneſs in God to convince children, by the ſufferings to which they were expoſed on account of their fathers idolatry, of the wretchedneſs that reſults from rebellion, and ſo engage them to return to allegiance, that is, to the poſſeſſion of every privilege,

privilege, and the enjoyment of every bleſ- SERM. VII.
ſing.

I ſhould now proceed, in the fourth place, to conſider the juſtice of this threatening and puniſhment. But this, with what remains beſides, I muſt leave to another opportunity.

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SERMON VIII.

Againſt IDOLATRY.

EXODUS xx, 4. 5. 6.

Thou ſhalt not make unto thee any graven image, or the likeneſs of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou ſhalt not bow down thyſelf to them, nor ſerve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, viſiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and ſhewing mercy unto thouſands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

IN the laſt diſcourſe I propoſed 1ſt. To make ſome remarks upon this paſſage. SERM. VIII.

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2dly. To conſider particularly the threatening.

3dly. To point out the folly of Idolatry.

4thly To conclude with ſome reflections.

I have already made ſome general remarks; and, in conſidering the threatening I have attempted to ſhew

1ſt. The nature of the puniſhment threatened.

2dly. The propriety of it.

3dly. The goodneſs of it.

I proceed now, in the fourth place, to ſhew the juſtice of it.

That the juſtice of this puniſhment may fully appear, I beſeech you will attend to the mode of expreſſion. It is not ſaid that the guilt of the idolatrous parents is imputed to their innocent children—no—that would be unjuſt indeed. Nor is it ſaid, that the innocent children are puniſhed for the tranſgreſſions of their idolatrous parents—no—that would alſo ſeem to be unjuſt. It is only ſaid, that God viſits the iniquities of the fathers upon their children

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or, in other words, that God puniſhes the Idolatry of the fathers in the ſufferings or viſitations of the children. The parent, then, is puniſhed; the children only ſuffer.

Children, in this caſe, as in many other paſſages of ſcripture, are conſidered as the moſt valuable enjoyments of parents.

And it is always juſt with God to puniſh men in their deareſt, and moſt beloved enjoyments—provided the children, who in this caſe are the enjoyments, are not unjuſtly dealt with.

Now, betwixt puniſhment and ſuffering there is a material diſtinction, though ſome endeavour to confound them. The difference is this. Puniſhment always ſuppoſes guilt in the perſon who is puniſhed, and that that guilt is the very foundation of the puniſhment; whereas ſufferings only imply, that the ſufferer is in a ſtate of trial. Now, to thoſe who are in a ſtate of trial, ſufferings are wiſely intended to refine their ſouls, to improve their virtue, to increaſe their reward.

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That an innocent man ſhould be puniſhed is moſt unjuſt, becauſe in that man there is no juſt foundation of puniſhment. That an innocent man ſhould ſuffer is not unjuſt, becauſe ſufferings, as they are experiments and trials of virtue, tend to his improvement, and ſufferings, if improved, will be productive of his greater felicity at laſt. This is the uniform doctrine of ſcripture: "our light afflictions, which are but "for a moment, work for us a far more "exceeding and eternal weight of glory."*

But it may be ſaid; is it not unjuſt that children ſhould be ſubjected to ſufferings on account of their fathers tranſgreſſions; that is, ſhould be incapacitated for holding offices of honour or emolument in a ſtate? To this it is replied, that children, as ſuch, have no rights. Where there is no right, there can be no alienation of right; where there is no alienation of right, there can be no injuſtice—as injuſtice conſiſts in the deprivation

* 2. Corinthians iv. 17.

deprivation of a juſt right, without the conſent or forfeiture of the proprietor. SERM VIII.

Thus, for inſtance, God promiſed to the firſt man perpetual exiſtence, upon condition of perpetual obedience. Now, had Adam continued eternally obedient to the divine commandment, and thus ſecured immortality to himſelf in conſequence of the divine veracity; it by no means follows, that Adam's children had any claim of right to immortality, becauſe immortality was to Adam the gift of God, a gift perſonal, not heritable; and to the gifts of God no creature has any right, previous to the promiſe or donation. Hence it is manifeſt, that God may make one man immortal, and another mortal, without doing the leaſt injuſtice to either—might extend the exiſtence of Adam to an unlimited duration, and limit the duration of his children to a determinate period.

If this, then, is true, that Adam's poſterity had no right to immortality, whilſt their father was obedient, and of conſequence

SERM. VIII. immortal, much leſs can they plead any ſhadow of right, when their father by diſobedience had forfeited immortality. Upon the ſame principle it is, that as God has a ſovereign and inconteſtable right to limit the exiſtence of his creatures, ſo has he alſo an undoubted right to limit the comforts, privileges, and advantages of that exiſtence.

Thus, if a jewiſh parent was advanced by God to preferments and offices of ſtate, it does not follow, that his children had any ground of right to theſe offices, becauſe theſe offices were the gift of God to the parent—to which gift the children can have no claim, ſince God may beſtow his gifts when, and where, and how he pleaſes.

If this, then, is true, that the children of ſuch parents have no claim of right to offices, even upon ſuppoſition of their father's loyalty, much leſs can they pretend to any right, in virtue of their father, when

their

their father by rebellion has forfeited his own. SERM. VIII.

The truth is, it is no more injuſtice in God to ſend into the world the children of ſome men, deſtitute of the capacity of holding beneficial and honorable offices, than it is injuſtice in him to ſend into the world the children of other men, blind, and poor, and void of underſtanding, and ſo deſtitute of many comforts and advantages, which the reſt of mankind enjoy. And why theſe ſufferings, or this incapacity, ſhould ſtand in connection with ſome notorious offence, ſuch as Idolatry, is obvious from this—That by cauſing the ſufferers to turn their eyes back to the ſource of their ſufferings, they may effectually deter them from thoſe practices, which are deſerving of chaſtiſement, and prompt them to return to that conduct, which is productive of felicity.

3dly. I proceed to ſhew the folly of Idolatry. And this will appear in the

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ſtrongeſt light, if we conſider three things.

1ſt. It is unreaſonable,

2dly. It is unlawful,

3dly. It is dangerous.

In the firſt place, Idolatry is fooliſh, becauſe it is unreaſonable. Not to acknowledge the exiſtence of a God, when the proofs of it are ſo cogent, is an inſtance of unpardonable weakneſs. To acknowledge a God, and yet to refuſe him that homage which his eſſential perfections merit, is an inſtance of weakneſs equally deplorable. But the greateſt abſurdity of all, and indeed the very conſummation of ſtupidity, is this—To offer adoration to a being, which has no perfections—gratitude to a being, which confers no benefits—and ſupplications to a being, which can neither hear the ſupplication, nor behold the ſupplicant, but is equally inattentive to the offering, and to the offerer. When a man once acts upon ſuch wild and frantic principles, it is a certain proof that he has abandoned reaſon, or rather,

then, perhaps, that reaſon has abandoned him. SERM. VIII.

Reaſon inculcates the higheſt reverence to the ſupreme God, and reprobates the worſhip of inferior Deities. Now, if maintaining ſuch a courſe of action, as reaſon approves, is ſufficient to conſtitute a man of ſenſe; ſurely, maintaining ſuch a courſe of action, as reaſon condemns, is ſufficient to conſtitute a fool. Idolatry, therefore, is fooliſh, becauſe unreaſonable.

2dly. It is fooliſh, becauſe it is unlawful. The law of God, which, in this region of darkneſs and perplexity, is a light unto our feet and a lamp unto our path, forbids Idolatry in the ſtrongeſt terms. The firſt commandment, "Thou ſhalt have no "other Gods before me"—The ſecond commandment, which has been often repeated—And the Apoſtle John's exhortation, "Little children, keep yourſelves from "Idols"—are all expreſs ſtatutes of heaven, poſitively prohibiting this unwarrantable practice.

Now,

SERM. VIII. Now, every law of God is obligatory upon every man, to whom that law is intimated: conſequently, the contempt or violation of ſuch law infers criminal offence againſt peremptory obligation, and argues, in the offender, a ſupreme defect of underſtanding, and a ſupreme perverſity of will. For if ſhewing reſpect to a law, in itſelf wiſe and good, and in its tendency calculated to promote the preſent and future welfare of the ſubject, is an undoubted proof of a wiſe and prudent man; then certainly, ſhewing contempt to ſuch a wholeſome and beneficial law, is the moſt convincing proof of a fool. For none will contemn a wiſe and good law, but a fool, whoſe character it is, as deſcribed by Solomon, "to hate inſtruction, and deſpiſe "knowledge." Idolatry, therefore, is fooliſh, becauſe unlawful.

3dly. It is fooliſh, becauſe it is dangerous. Idolatry is at once an offence againſt reaſon and ſcripture, and therefore doubly full of danger. Idolatry is a two-

fold

fold crime, and conſequently merits a two- SERM. VIII.
fold puniſhment. If God expreſſed ſuch indignation againſt it to the Jews, who lived under a comparatively dark and obſcure diſpenſation, and puniſhed it with ſuch ſeverity, not only in the ſufferings of the tranſgreſſor himſelf, but alſo in the ſufferings of his poſterity; of how much ſorer puniſhment, ſuppoſe ye, ſhall we be thought worthy, if we baſely trample upon ſuperior love—if we wantonly abuſe ſuperior light—if we wilfully proſtitute ſuperior bleſſings?

The puni ments, annexed to Jewiſh Idolatry, were temporal; the puniſhments annexed to chriſtian Idolatry, are eternal: for, in proportion to the aggravation of the crime, will ever be the aggravation of the puniſhment.

Now, for a man to be an Idolater, in the face of ſo much danger, is, in other words, for a man to be a fool. For if to ſeek peace, conſult ſafety, provide for happineſs, be an argument of wiſdom; then

SERM. VIII. then, to fly from ſafety, to court danger, and to run into wretchedneſs, muſt be an argument, no leſs convincing, of the greateſt folly. Idolatry, therefore, is fooliſh, becauſe dangerous.

I ſhall now conclude the diſcourſe with two reflections.

Reflection 1ſt. Let us guard againſt Idolatry. It is unreaſonable; therefore let us deſpiſe it. It is unlawful; therefore let us deteſt it. It is dangerous; therefore let us fly from it.

Reflection 2d. Let us form becoming and amiable conceptions of God. This will kill every ſeed of Idolatry, and produce a becoming and amiable worſhip. The ground-work of all religion is the character of God. As our conceptions of it are honourable or injurious, our religion will be, either an elevated piety, or a low ſuperſtition. If our conceptions of God are juſt and true, our religious ſentiments will be refined, liberal, manly, ſublime; if our conceptions of God are falſe and ſpurious,

ſpurious, our religious ſentiments will be ſordid, grovelling, illiberal, contracted. Juſt conceptions of God inſpire gratitude, charity, reſignation to providence. Unjuſt conceptions of God inſtil, into the heart, ſelfiſhneſs, dejection, bigotry. SERM. VIII.

Let us contemplate God as the univerſal parent, not as the univerſal tyrant, of mankind. The one makes us children, the other makes us ſlaves. From the firſt ſprings filial love; from the ſecond, a baſe and ſervile ſpirit.

As God is a ſpirit, let us worſhip him in ſpirit; as God is true, let us worſhip him in truth; as God is pure, let us worſhip him in purity; as God is love, let us worſhip him in love. And ſtill let the probity and goodneſs of our conduct, be the publick vouchers of the probity and goodneſs of our hearts; that ſo men may eſteem us as faithful friends, and God may reward us as faithful ſervants. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON IX.

Againſt COVETOUSNESS.

HEBREWS xiii: 5.

Let your converſation be without Covetouſneſs, and be content with ſuch things as ye have.

HAPPINESS is an object, which all purſue, but which few obtain. Every man knows, that contentment is the foundation of happineſs; but few men, alas! know

SERM. IX. know what is the foundation of contentment.

Indeed, the road which the generality of mankind take, and the plan which they form, in order to ſecure it, plainly demonſtrate, that they know not where it lies. For, though the earth cryeth, it is not in me; though riches ſay, we cannot give it; though it cannot be purchaſed with gold, nor can ſilver be weighed as the price of it: yet men, alas! heedleſs and unthinking, deaf to the voice of reaſon and prudence, at once buſy and idle, vex themſelves in the fruitleſs purſuit, and, ſtrange infatuation! run from that, which they are running after—becauſe, ſetting out in an oppoſite direction, the farther they go, the farther they go wrong.

To ſet us right in a matter ſo important, the following conſiderations are humbly propoſed. The words, which I have read for this purpoſe, naturally divide themſelves into two branches. The firſt condemns covetouſneſs; the ſecond enjoins content-

contentment. Purſuant, therefore, to the ſpirit of the text, I will endeavour to demonſtrate SERM. IX.

1ſt. The folly of covetouſneſs,——and

2dly. The wiſdom of contentment—that ſo we may be diſpoſed, during the remainder of our lives, "to have our converſation without covetouſneſs, and to be "content with ſuch things as we have."

1ſt. I am to demonſtrate the folly of covetouſneſs.

To diſcover the genuine complexion of any principle, we muſt view it both in its nature and effects; and if, upon an impartial enquiry, we find it, in both theſe particulars, inconſiſtent with the dictates of true wiſdom, we need not heſitate a moment to call it folly, nor the man, who regulates his conduct by it, a fool.

To apply this obſervation to the preſent purpoſe. Covetouſneſs is a fooliſh thing, becauſe, both in its nature and effects, it is inconſiſtent with the dictates of real wiſdom. It is fooliſh in its nature, becauſe

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the deſire is inſatiable. It is fooliſh in its effects, becauſe they have no influence upon real happineſs.

1ſt. It is fooliſh, becauſe it cannot ſatisfy itſelf.

2dly. It is fooliſh, becauſe it cannot ſatisfy us.

But, before I proceed to the diſcuſſion of theſe points, I think it proper to ſhew what covetouſneſs is, that ſo we may underſtand the ſubject we are inveſtigating.

1ſt. I will ſhew what covetouſneſs is not.

2dly. I will ſhew what covetouſnes is.

1ſt. I am to ſhew what covetouſneſs is not.

Induſtry, or proper application to buſineſs, does not conſtitute covetouſneſs. God ſends no man into the world, merely to be idle, to look about him, and to die—no—but to live, and to enjoy the bleſſings of life, conſiſtently with the principles of honour and integrity. Theſe important points cannot

cannot be attained but by activity and attention. SERM. IX.

Again; many of us have families, which muſt not ſtarve, but muſt be ſupported, reſcued from want, raiſed above dependence, enjoy the comforts of life—be happy. Theſe great objects cannot be accompliſhed but by unwearied diligence and inceſſant exertion.

Laſt of all; Induſtry is an expreſs law of religion—"Go to the ant, thou ſluggard; "conſider her ways, and be wiſe: though "ſhe has no guide, overſeer, or ruler, "yet ſhe provideth her meat in the ſum-"mer, and gathereth her food in the "harveſt." And again—"he that pro-"videth not for thoſe of his own houſe, "has denied the faith, and is worſe than "an infidel." As induſtry, then, is allied to religion, it cannot, in any ſenſe, be allied to covetouſneſs.

2dly. Frugality, or proper management of the materials of comfort which we poſſeſs, does not conſtitute covetouſneſs. The

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goods of earth are the gifts of heaven; and of Gods gifts, men are the ſtewards. Now of a ſteward are required prudence, attention, fidelity. Beſides, to make our income the boundary of our expence, is wiſe and prudent. To extend our benefactions beyond the limits of our fortune, is weak and fooliſh. A wiſe man will not make himſelf a beggar, that fools may proclaim his generoſity. It is a proof of a man's want of judgment to throw away his money to pleaſe knaves and ſycophants, who will be the firſt to laugh at him, when once his purſe becomes as empty as his brain.

Whatever fortune God is pleaſed to give, man ſhould be pleaſed to receive—to receive with gratitude, manage with prudence, and ſpend with propriety. He has the juſteſt notion of the providence of God, who has ſome providence of his own. A prodigal is a creature juſt as worthleſs as a miſer. Frugality, therefore, which is an eſſential ingredient of wiſdom, cannot conſtitute covetouſneſs, which is folly.

2dly.

2dly. I proceed to ſhew what covetouſneſs is. SERM. IX.

Covetouſneſs conſiſts in two things.

1ſt. When a man ſets his heart upon getting money by all means.

2dly. When he ſets his heart upon keeping money by all means.

1ſt. A man is covetous, when he ſets his heart upon getting money. This world is not our home, but only the country, through which we paſs to it. Wiſe travellers do not affect ſuperfluities: they wiſh for nothing more, than what will honourably tranſport them to their journey's end. It is but an indifferent mark of a man's underſtanding, when he is ſo much pleaſed with the road he travels on, as to forget the place he travels to; yet, ſuch is the conduct of the covetous man. He forgets that he is formed for another world, and ſo centers all his treaſures in this—"And where his "treaſure is, there will his heart be "alſo"—"where the carcaſe lies, there are "the eagles gathered together."

SERM. IX. Religion conſiders money as a ſubordinate good; covetouſneſs conſiders money as the ſupreme good. Religion exhorts us to ſeek for money by doing our duty, and truſting the iſſue to providence; covetouſneſs forces us to do more than our duty, and not to truſt to providence at all. Therefore, whilſt the doctrine of religion inſpires ſerenity, chearfulneſs, hope, the doctrine of covetouſneſs begets anxiety, fretfulneſs, ſolicitude.

Religion directs men to acquire money by ſlow, deliberate, and gradual ſteps; covetouſneſs directs them to be rich at once —to make wings, and fly to riches, leſt riches ſhould make wings, and fly from them. Religion teaches men to ſeek for wealth in the way of honeſty; covetouſneſs teaches them to ſubmit to no reſtraint, but to graſp at gain by every artifice, and puſh their way to it through ſubtilty, ſtratagem, and plunder. Now, when once the love of money makes a man rapacious, fretful, and

and diſhoneſt, he is that moment juſtly intitled to the name of covetous. SERM. IX.

2dly. A man is covetous, when his heart is ſet upon keeping money. Money is to the world, what blood is to the body. When the blood circulates properly, the body is in health; when it flows irregularly, the body is in pain: ſo when money circulates with ſprightlineſs, the world proſpers; when money ſtagnates, the world declines. The great uſe of money is, to promote the good of the world; when that uſe is loſt, the money-keeper becomes the foe of ſociety.

Such, indeed, is the covetous man. He forgets the proper uſes, which render money valuable; he applies it to purpoſes, which render it uſeleſs. Not aware, that money can purchaſe no enjoyment till once it is parted with, he vainly thinks, that the only enjoyment of money is to hold it faſt. The reaſon ſeems to be this—eſteeming money as his only happineſs, he naturally concludes, that every diminution

SERM. IX. of his money will be a proportionable diminution of his happineſs. Conſequently, though both hands are ever open to receive, there is never one hand open to beſtow.

The royal prerogative of goodneſs is to diffuſe; the degrading quality of covetouſneſs is to ſhut up. Therefore, when the voice of religion and humanity calls upon the covetous man to miniſter relief to the fatherleſs and indigent, he is deaf to the inſtructions of the wiſe, and blind to the examples of the good: the cries of poverty cannot pierce his heart. Alas! his heart is harder than his gold. The objects of diſtreſs cannot move his compaſſion; he is wrapt up wholly within himſelf. His charity ends where it ſhould only begin, that is, at home. For though he is greedy as the ſea, yet he is barren as the ſhore; and, therefore, only fit to live in this world, becauſe he is not fit to live in another.

I now proceed to the firſt point propoſed, which

which was to demonſtrate the folly of covetouſneſs. SERM. IX.

1ſt. It is fooliſh, becauſe the deſire is inſatiable. Nature, my brethen, contents herſelf with what is neceſſary; reaſon aſks no more than what is convenient; ſelf-love is pleaſed with what is agreeable: but our paſſions ever graſp at exceſs and ſuperfluity.

True it is, that a covetous mind may propoſe to itſelf ſome certain boundary, at which to ſtop, where it will ceaſe to be anxious, and begin to enjoy; but it is as true, that the growing nature of this reſtleſs propenſity, and the uniform experience of covetous men, clearly prove, that this ſcheme is not the well-weighed reſolution of a wiſe, but the fooliſh imagination of an ignorant man. For a much wiſer man than he has told him—"that he who loveth ſilver ſhall "not be ſatisfied with ſilver, nor he who loveth abundance be ſatisfied with increaſe."

A man, who has no God but his gold, no object of worſhip but his money, may rap-

SERM. IX. rapturouſly exclaim—O heaven! what a world of felicity ſhould I enjoy, were I poſſeſſed of ſuch a ſum, could I call myſelf maſter of ſuch a fortune! Stop there, my Friend, till I tell you a ſecret, to which you ſeem as yet to be an utter ſtranger. Your preſent unhappineſs does not ſpring from the narrowneſs of your eſtate, but from the narrowneſs of your ſoul; conſequently, your after-happineſs, if any happineſs you afterwards enjoy, muſt correſpond, not to the enlargement of your fortune, but to the enlargement of your heart. Endeavour to poſſeſs a ſoul, good, open, generous, and you will be happy, this moment, in the grateful enjoyment of the bleſſings which you have; but if you continue to poſſeſs ſuch a ſoul as you have now, ſordid, illiberal, contracted, you muſt be miſerable, though rioting in all the luxuries of affluence, though decked with all the ſplendors of a court. It is a man's mind, not his money, which muſt be the ſtandard of his happineſs.

Yes,

Yes, ſays the covetous man, a great deal, no doubt, depends upon the mind; but a great deal, alſo, depends upon the means. I ſee a man, who poſſeſſes all the accommodations of felicity. Were I in his ſituation, I ſhould queſtionleſs be much happier than I am. You may be in a miſtake. You ſee the man's accommodations, but you ſee not his enjoyment. You ſee his furniture, but you ſee not his temper. You ſee his fortune, but you ſee not his heart. What ſhall I ſay? Perhaps, ſome ſecret diſcontent, like an envenomed canker, gnaws upon his ſoul, and eats out the very vitals of his joy. Therefore, if you knew him, as well as he knows himſelf, you would rather lament his ſituation as an object of pity, than regard it as an object of envy. SERM. IX.

Gold, a glittering ſubſtance, impoſes upon weak minds, and dazzles the eyes of weak men; but ſtrong minds are not ſo eaſily impoſed on. Good ſenſe and ſound judgment are not caught with ſhadows; and a prudent man often diſcovers a dangerous

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gerous pit beneath a garniſhed ſurface. Therefore, expect happineſs from the contraction of your appetites, not from the exuberance of your fortune.

In human nature there are various paſſions, which may all be properly reduced to theſe two claſſes:

1ſt. Thoſe that are natural to the ſoul.

2dly. Thoſe that are foreign to it.

Indeed, the one is nothing elſe, but the exceſs and perverſion of the other. Now, the infallible mark, by which we may diſtinguiſh the natural from the foreign, the genuine from the ſpurious deſire, is this:—Every deſire, that is natural and genuine, is pleaſed, when once it has obtained the object of its wiſhes, and from enjoyment gently returns to reſt. Thus, hunger is ſatisfied with a proper proportion of food; thirſt, with a proper proportion of drink; and when nature is worn out with labour, the deſire of reſt is ſatisfied with a proper proportion of ſleep.

On the other hand, the deſires, which are unnatural and fictitious, are never ſatisfied

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ſatisfied. "They are like the troubled "ſea, which never reſts, but is always "throwing up mire and dirt." Thus, a drunkard is always dry, becauſe he always drinks himſelf athirſt, and has no reaſon to drink more, but merely becauſe he has drunk too much already.

Natural deſires are like a well-broke horſe, which, obedient to the rein, peaceably carries the traveller on his way. Fictitious deſires, which are not the lawful children, but the baſtards of nature, are like a horſe unbroke, which, yielding to no reſtraint, wildly runs away, and throws his rider.

From theſe principles the concluſion is plain, which is, that covetouſneſs is not a deſire of nature, elſe nature would have provided for its ſatisfaction; but the deſire of a diſtemper, which will never be at eaſe, till the diſtemper is removed.

Covetouſneſs is the dropſy of the ſoul, which, like one in the body, is not to be cured by drink, but by temperance. Abſtinence

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nence, in ſuch caſes, is the only remedy, becauſe the more a man drinks, the more he is inflamed, and there is but little hope of recovery, when the diſeaſe encreaſes under the application.

Covetouſneſs is a bottomleſs gulf, into which if you would throw all the riches in the world, it would ſtill be empty.

Covetouſneſs is like the lion's den, into which were ſeen the footſteps of thouſands entering, but of none returning.

Covetouſneſs is the image of the grave, which, though it daily receives multitudes with open mouth, yet, with a mouth as open, it daily cries, give, give.

Nay, covetouſneſs is the very picture of hell, the worſt of all originals, which is ever receiving, but never reſtoring, ever taking in, but never letting out.

If this is the true nature of covetouſneſs, ſtill the more it has, ſtill for more to wiſh—to ſnatch on the right hand and be hungry, and on the left and not be ſatisfied—then, an attempt to gratify this boundleſs

boundleſs appetite muſt be the very conſum- SERM. XI.
mation of weakneſs and folly—becauſe as the capacity of receiving is unlimited, the deſire will increaſe much faſter than the fortune. Hence the richer the man is, he is ſtill the poorer, becauſe every addition to his wealth, is an addition to his care, but none to his happineſs—Of conſequence, it is impoſſible, in the nature of things, that covetouſneſs can ever ſatisfy itſelf.

I ſhould, now, proceed to conſider the effects of covetouſneſs; but your time will not permit.

SERMON

SERMON X.

Againſt COVETOUSNESS.

HEBREWS xiii: 5.

Let your converſation be without Covetouſneſs, and be content with ſuch things as ye have.

IN a former diſcourſe upon this text I propoſed to ſhew SERM. X.

1ſt. The folly of covetouſneſs; and

2dly. The wiſdom of contentment.

SERM. X.

To manifeſt the folly of covetouſneſs, I mentioned two things:

1ſt. That its deſire is inſatiable.

2dly. That its effects have no influence upon real happineſs.

That the deſire of covetouſneſs is inſatiable, I have already proved.

I come now to ſhew, ſecondly, that the effects of covetouſneſs have no influence upon real happineſs.

If contentment conſiſted in wealth, then wealth would be the ſtandard of contentment. A man's gold and happineſs, put in the ſcales, would prove an equal balance to each other. But this is a ſuppoſition ſo palpably abſurd, that I ſhould conſider it as an inſult offered to your underſtanding, were I to attempt, by ſerious argument, to confute a doctrine, which more than abundantly confutes itſelf.

The truth is, riches in themſelves are neither good nor bad. It is the proper or improper uſe of them, which makes them either a bleſſing or a curſe. A quiet and

chearful

chearful temper will be happy without them. A fretful and anxious ſpirit will be unhappy with them. A reaſonable competency, in our reſpective ſituations, is, I acknowledge, an agreeable circumſtance. Agar's prayer will ever recommend itſelf to the approbation of intelligent men—„ " Lord! give me neither poverty nor " riches, but feed me with food convenient " for me—Not poverty, leſt I be poor and ſteal—Not riches, leſt I be full and deny thee."

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But though a reaſonable competency is an ineſtimable bleſſing, yet riches, which are ſomething more, and to which coveteouſneſs inceſſantly aſpires, are not ſo vaſt a bleſſing as the heart of a covetous man may fondly imagine.*

* A competence is vital to content:
Much wealth is corpulence, if not diſeaſe;
Sick or incumber'd is our happineſs:
A competence is all we can enjoy.
O be content, where Heaven can give no more.
More, like a flaſh of water from a cock,
Quickens our ſpirit's movement for an hour;
But ſoon its force is ſpent; nor riſe our joys
Above our native temper's common ſtream.
Hence diſappointment lurks in every prize,
As bees in flowers, and ſtings us with ſucceſs.

YOUNG.

SERM. X. Every poſſeſſion is valuable in exact proportion to the real benefits, which it confers upon the poſſeſſor. By this principle, let us try the efficacy of riches upon happineſs.

Friendſhip is a valuable bleſſing. It is truly the ſweetener of life; and, without it, the days of our pilgrimage would paſs heavily away. Now, can riches purchaſe a friend, a ſincere and faithful friend? If they could, I acknowledge riches would be worth the coveting. But, alas! friendſhip is a thing too generous and divine to be bought with money. Friendſhip is the only price of friendſhip, and intrinſic worth the ſole foundation of a ſolid and permanent friendſhip.

I grant, indeed, a rich man will never want thoſe who pretend to be his friends; but, between a pretence and a reality, judicious men will diſcern a difference. Men, in ſuch caſes, are, for the moſt part, more attached to the money than the man, and reſpect him more for what he has, than

than for what he is. Hence, if ever it ſhould pleaſe the providence of God to make a trial of ſuch mens friendſhip, by reverſing the rich man's ſituation, it is ſhrewdly ſuſpected, that the ſame blaſt, which ſtrips him of his fortune, will alſo ſtrip him of his friends. SERM X.

I doubt not, but a rich man may often have true and ſteady friends; but then, it is not becauſe he is a rich man, but becauſe he is a wiſe and good man. And if this is the caſe, then riches are uſeleſs in this reſpect, becauſe wiſe and good men, whether they are rich or not, will always have ſincere and faithful friends; for wiſdom and goodneſs are qualities eſſentially attractive of eſteem and affection.

Health is another valuable bleſſing; indeed, the foundation of every comfort. Now, when the body, that frail and mortal tabernacle, is tortured with agony, and racked with pain, can riches purchaſe a deliverance from ſickneſs, and the reſtoration of health? Alas! riches, on the

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contrary, often prove the means of bringing on diſtempers, by making their owners idle, luxurious, intemperate—but can neither prevent the approach of diſeaſes, nor cure them when they come. Riches may, indeed, purchaſe the advice of the phyſician, and perhaps, too, the prayers of the divine. But theſe, alas! are but feeble aids againſt the infirmities of nature, or the wrecks of a conſtitution, ſhattered by intemperance, and worn down by exceſs.

Riches are ſo far from being a preſervative againſt ſickneſs, that they open up more fountains of diſeaſe than poverty itſelf. The rich man is equally ſubjected, with the poor man, to the diſeaſes of nature; but, beſides theſe, he is likewiſe ſubjected to the diſeaſes of intemperance, from which the poor man is perpetually exempt.

The uſe of reaſon is another valuable bleſſing; it is this, indeed, which, properly ſpeaking, makes the man. Now, can riches

riches purchaſe the continuance of this? No: they can neither guard againſt thoſe accidents which may unhinge the underſtanding; nor, when the underſtanding is unhinged, can they repair the diſordered faculty, or reſtore the mind to its former energy. If wiſdom could be bought with money, rich men would, for the moſt part, be wiſer than they are. But wiſdom is the gift of God, not the purchaſe of gold; and, therefore, may be the inheritance of a poor man, as well as of a rich. SERM. X.

The continuance of life is another bleſſing. Can riches ſecure this? Alas! riches often ſhorten men's days, by leading them into debauchery, or by making them a prey to villains. But when once the ſprings of nature are worn out, and the man is ſtretched upon a bed of death, all the gold and ſilver in the world, though heaped like mountains around him, cannot purchaſe a reprieve from the king of terrors, nor ſave him one moment from his approaching doom. If riches could purchaſe life, rich

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men would never die. Rich men would live for ever, if riches could procure them an exemption from mortality.

Now, if riches can purchaſe none of thoſe bleſſings which I have mentioned, let me aſk, what bleſſings can they purchaſe? Why, it may be ſaid, they can, at leaſt, make men happy in the ſeaſons of youth and proſperity. But, in the ſeaſons of youth and proſperity, men have no need of riches to make them happy—ſo that the beſt thing which can be ſaid of riches, is this—and indeed, if one were to write a panegyrick upon them, the amount of it would only be—that riches can make men happy in thoſe circumſtances, when they have it in their power to be happy without them. A very little will give a man all that nature and reaſon can deſire, and a very great deal cannot give him more—becauſe, when the deſires of nature and reaſon are ſatisfied, the man is happy, and no affluence whatever can make him more than happy.

Suppoſe

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Suppoſe a man had an eſtate a thouſand times as large as his real neceſſities; what would be the conſequence? Why, he is ſtill a man, and, therefore, could enjoy it only according to the capacity of a man. For though ſuch abundance might create a thouſand cares, yet it could not create a thouſand capacities; and if he were wiſe, inſtead of giving himſelf up to riot and debauchery, which might ſoon end in his ruin, he would ſtudy moderation in every entertainment, the health of his body in every indulgence, and the ſpirit of temperance in every enjoyment.

A man of this fortune, it is true, may be always idle; that is, in other words, may be always miſerable. A man of this fortune may be often drunk; that is, in other words, may be often a beaſt. A man of this fortune may travel through life, in the midſt of pomp, magnificence, and ſplendor. But what are theſe? The eſſentials of happineſs? No: they are only its glittering outſide and gaudy trappings, but

do

SERM. X. do not add a ſingle grain to our real ſatiſfaction.

Hitherto we have conſidered the effect of riches upon happineſs in general. Let us now conſider their effect upon a covetous man's happineſs in particular. If a covetous man has riches, they are loſt to himſelf, as well as to the world, becauſe his ſordid heart forbids him to enjoy them. "He "hath indeed," as one well obſerves," the "eſtate of a rich man; but then he wants "the comforts of it, becauſe he hath the "heart of a poor man."

The true end of poſſeſſion is enjoyment. But to poſſeſs is one thing, and to enjoy is another. What we enjoy is really ours; what we do not enjoy is really not ours, even though we poſſeſs it. He, therefore, who poſſeſſes a large eſtate, but does not enjoy it, is nothing more than a factor to his ſon; and it is odds, but the ſon, by his prodigality, will make as great haſte to be poor, as ever the father by his covetouſneſs did to be rich.

A

SERM. X.

A poor man is conſidered by many as a deſpicable character. Nothing can be more unjuſt. But would you ſee a character truly deſpicable?—behold a man poor in the midſt of riches, and ſtarving in the midſt of plenty. This is a deplorable character indeed. Poverty, ſupported by contentment, is riches; but riches, however great, are nothing more than poverty to him, who ever dreads he ſhall be poor.

The only good reaſon, why any man can wiſh to be rich, is, to make life comfortable. But he, who torments himſelf in getting riches, and cannot enjoy them when he has them, effectually defeats his own purpoſe, and makes his life miſerable in reality, that he may make it comfortable in appearance.*

Every rational perſon propoſes to himſelf ſome rational end. But what rational end can that man propoſe, who torments himſelf

* The miſer's ever poor; thy wiſh ſhould fall
On ſome fix'd end; who has enough, has all.

HORACE.

SERM. X. ſelf about that which he can never enjoy? "The deſires of a moderate man," ſays an eminent divine, "may be gratified, be- "cauſe, they are moderate; "but the "wants of a covetous man can never be "ſupplied, becauſe he has deviſed the "matter ſo cunningly, as to want even "that which he hath."†

Such a man does not wiſh for riches, that he may ſupply his wants; but is content to want, that he may be rich. Other men wiſh for money, that they may live; but the covetous man wiſhes to live, that he may make money.

Hence it follows, that though the covetous man were poſſeſſed of all the riches in the world, he would ſtill be in want, and being ſtill in want, would be ſtill unhappy. By changing his condition, he only changes the form and ſurface of his miſery—becauſe, wherever he goes, his mind goes with him; and wherever his mind is, there is hell. O covetouſneſs! thou art a hard maſter. Thou keepeſt thy ſlaves in perpetual drudgery,

† Tillotſon.

gery, and yet witholdeſt from them their proper wages. Thou keepeſt from them their meat, and ſleep, and cloathing, and giveſt them nothing but ſorrow and pain. SERM. X.

Thus have I endeavoured to ſhew you the folly of covetouſneſs, as a thing inſatiable in its nature, and unſatisfactory in its effects.

The ſecond thing propoſed, agreeable to the plan of the text, was to point out the wiſdom of contentment. But this I have anticipated, by ſhewing you the folly of covetouſneſs. For if covetouſneſs conſtitutes folly, then, by the juſteſt rule of contraries, contentment muſt conſtitute wiſdom, becauſe they are two principles of action in the ſoul directly oppoſite. Therefore, if the one is wrong, the other muſt, of neceſſity, be right.

As this is the caſe, I ſhall, in what remains of the diſcourſe, point out ſome of thoſe errors from which diſcontent ariſes, and offer ſome advice for the correction of thoſe errors.

The

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The errors, from which diſcontent ariſes, ſeem to be theſe two:

1ſt. A falſe opinion of ourſelves.

2dly. A falſe opinion of thoſe external objects, which nature recommends to our enjoyment.

The firſt error is a falſe opinion of ourſelves. Moſt men form too lofty ideas of their own excellence; and, through the medium of ſelf-love, ſee perfections in themſelves, which are inviſible to the impartial ſpectator. From theſe overweening conceits they readily draw this concluſion, that their ſuperior merit is juſtly deſerving of ſuperior favours. Thus, we find men, in general, perfectly pleaſed with what they are—utterly diſpleaſed with what they have—abundantly contented with their ſenſe, piety, manners—highly diſcontented with their fortune or rank in life.

The error is viſible; but how ſhall we correct it? By liſtening to the voice of ſelf-love?—no—but by liſtening to the voice of reaſon, which teaches us a more

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ſalutary leſſon, namely, that we ſhould rather be diſpleaſed with what we are, becauſe we are not what we ſhould be—and ſatisfied with what we have, becauſe the worſt of us have more than the beſt of us deſerve. Every bleſſing is the gift of God, and to God's gifts no man can ſhew any juſt claim. A modeſt and becoming ſenſe of our real character will infallibly produce content; Lofty and exalted notions of our own merit will involve us in perpetual diſcontent, and keep us in eternal agitation—becauſe every thing in this world may give us unhappineſs, but nothing in it can yield us complete ſatisfaction. Vexation, therefore, will attend us in every ſtep of life, either from diſappointment or ſatiety. We ſhall always be unhappy till our paſſions are gratified, becauſe till then there is no enjoyment. When our paſſions are gratified, we ſhall ſtill be unhappy, becauſe then we ſhall ſink into a dull inſenſibility, and dejection of mind. Firſt we ſhall be impatient, becauſe we want certain

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SERM. X. certain objects; then, we ſhall be impatient when we have them, becauſe we find theſe objects wanting in themſelves. Thus, for ever on the wing, we ſhall fly from object to object, in fruitleſs purſuit of a good, which we can never overtake; in fruitleſs expectation of a good, which the object we are in queſt of can never impart.

And this points to the ſecond error, from which diſcontent ariſes. The ſource of the error lies here. In the early periods of life, when we begin to emerge from obſcurity, and ſtep forth into the world, to act our reſpective parts on the publick theatre of life—when our paſſions are boiling and impetuous, our underſtandings raw and untutored, and our experience ſcanty and imperfect—we form ideas of felicity, too lofty and exalted. Reaſon, a cool and ſedate principle, has not yet gathered ſtrength; imagination introduces her flowery proſpects; every object of delight is painted beyond the truth; and every capacity

capacity of enjoyment, much bigger than the life: from which crude and ſanguine notions eternal diſappointments muſt enſue —becauſe the ſimplicity of nature will never quadrate with the extravagance of the imagination, nor the enjoyment ever correſpond to the warmth of a heated fancy— but every object which we admire, whether preſent or abſent, will ſow in our hearts the ſeeds of uneaſineſs. SERM. X.

If the object is abſent, our miſery will be great, becauſe proportioned to its imaginary good. If the object is preſent, our entertainment will be but ſmall, becauſe proportioned only to its real good. Nay, not ſo much; the diſappointment, which experience brings, will balk the expectation, fret the temper, and ſour the ſpirit.

The error is obvious: but how is it to be rectified? The road is plain: check this impertinence of the imagination, that intruding and deluſive faculty. Bravely deſtroy its uſurped ſovereignty; and let reaſon, now improved, exerciſe an uncontrolable ſway.

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When this is done, you will be contented, becauſe then every enjoyment will correſpond to thoſe ideas, which nature and reaſon have formed. But while this is undone, diſappointment will follow diſappointment in everlaſting ſucceſſion; vexation will pave the way to vexation, and black deſpair at laſt complete the ſcene of wretchedneſs.

For this is the law of nature, unchangeable as nature itſelf, that every falſe and fantaſtic opinion will betray us into endleſs perplexity, but that every juſt and rational ſentiment will eſtabliſh the foundation of ſolid comfort; and experience itſelf, which ſullies the luſtre of each ſplendid trifle, and damps the gaiety of each fanciful enjoyment, will to eternity exalt and dignify the real worth of each ſubſtantial good.

Laſt of all; to engage us to follow, with unſhaken conſtancy, the admonition in the text, let us remember, that every ſituation in life is the deſtination of God; a being

too wiſe to miſtake our happineſs, and too good not to promote it. This reflection will teach us a perfect reſignation to his providence, a chearful contentment with his diſcipline, and a lively gratitude for his benefactions. SERM. X.

Let us alſo remember, that this world is not the concluding ſcene of human exiſtence, but only its opening and introductory ſcene; a ſcene, eſſentially connected with, and plainly preparatory to another—a brighter and better habitation, in which we are taught, by the authority of God, to expect a felicity, worthy of the nobleſt faculties of our nature, and adapted to its moſt exalted deſires; a felicity, in extent commenſurate to the capacities of man, and in duration commenſurate to the eternity of God; a felicity, in ſhort, ſo great, ſo unſpeakable, ſo full of glory, that the moſt magnificent ſplendors of this earth, compared to it, are low and deſpicable—only faint and fading images—yea, have no glory at all, by reaſon of the glory that excelleth.

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This conſideration will inſpire us with ſubmiſſion to the will of God, and animate us to prepare for eternity. Fully convinced, that this world is not the place of our reſt, but that our ſupreme intereſt lies in another country, like prudent pilgrims, to ſweeten our journey, we will ſuppreſs the emotions of peeviſhneſs and paſſion, and train up our ſouls, by contentment and every other virtue, for the immortal delights of that ſuperior world, where gold and ſilver are of no value; where covetouſneſs never enters; where ſelfiſhneſs is not known; where anxiety has no place; and every ſordid affection is for ever extinguiſhed—that ſuperior world, where peace never ceaſes, hope never deceives, contentment never dies, friendſhip never flags, charity never fails, and happineſs never fades—but ſhines forth in one unclouded day, bright as the ſun, and immortal as its ſource. Amen!

SERMON

SERMON XI.

Againſt LYING.

COLLOSIANS iii: 9.

Lie not one to another.

IF the propriety of a ſubject juſtifies the choice of it, then I am ſure, that the choice of this ſubject is abundantly juſtified. For though the diſcourſe may not perhaps be ſuitable to the text, yet the text is moſt ſuitable to the genius of the age; an age, when

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SERM. XI. when free thinking and free ſpeaking go hand in hand; when varniſh and deception are ſo much in vogue; when falſhood ſeems to ſupplant veracity; and when, in one word, religion and an unſhaken attachment to truth are ſcarcely conſidered as eſſential ingredients in a finiſhed and faſhionable character.

This Apoſtolic precept, on which I have pitched as the groundwork of ſome obſervations, is of ſmall bulk, but of large ſenſe, of few words, but of vaſt comprehenſion. It is a precept, which virtually enjoins a ſacred regard to truth, and for ever reprobates the vice of lying; a vice, ſo groſs that nothing can equal it but its commonneſs, and ſo common that nothing can equal it but its groſſneſs. It is a precept frequently inculcated in preachings, which few regard, but more frequently, alas! violated in practice; which ſhews (and to your reproach be it mentioned) that it is an eaſier matter for us to preach, than for you to ſpeak truth.

To engage us to a more profound reſpect

for this celeſtial and important virtue, the following diſcourſe is intended. SERM. XI.

1ſt. I will endeavour to ſhew, that it is unlawful in any man, at any time, upon any pretence, to lie.

2dly. I will endeavour to ſhew the baſeneſs of lying.

3dly. I will point out the pernicious conſequences of it.

Laſtly. I will conclude with ſome directions.

1ſt. I am to ſhew the unlawfulneſs of lying. Truth, my brethren, is an eſſential attribute of God, and from his authority derives its eſtabliſhment. Hence, it muſt be of unchangeable and everlaſting obligation; and, therefore, cannot poſſibly be ſubject to our limitations, liable to caprice, or obnoxious to change. For, if it were, it would not, it could not conſtitute a part of religion and virtue—of religion and virtue, which abhor all flexibility, and have immutable rectitude for their baſis. Eaſy, pliant truth, or rather falſhood, may indeed

SERM. XI. be, and, alas! often is a part of that virtue, which is recommended by changeable men; but can never be a part of that virtue, which is authoriſed by the unchangeable God.

This is a fact that cannot be diſputed. For as ſoon as we baniſh truth from its original throne, remove it from its fixed and permanent foundation, and limit it according to the unſtable notions of our fluctuating judgments, we that moment diſſolve its eternal obligation, ſubvert its divine authority, bring it down to our level, become a rule to that which ſhould be a rule to us, ſet up ourſelves as the only juſt and infallible ſtandard (though perhaps we could not chuſe a worſe) and conſtitute ourſelves the ſole judges, when it is proper, and when not, to ſpeak truth, or to lie. Than ſuch conduct there cannot be a more convincing proof, that we are one of theſe two; either great knaves, or great fools; great fools, and do not underſtand what truth means; or great knaves, and ſo find it inconvenient to obſerve it.

Truth

Truth is not only an eſſential per- SERM. XI.
fection of the deity, and, therefore, unchangeable; but it is alſo the great ligament of human ſociety, and, therefore, obligatory on all its members. Men, it is evident, are ſociable beings. Wants, fears, neceſſities, incline them to fly from ſolitude, and prompt them to incorporate. Of this incorporation, certain laws, mutually conſented to, and conſtitutionally unalterable, eſtabliſh the foundation. In conſequence of this, every infringement of theſe laws, which ſupport ſociety, muſt of neceſſity tend to its deſtruction. Now, that principle or law, which cements ſociety, is mutual truſt. Of this truſt the immediate foundation is truth. Take away truth, then, the foundation of truſt; and truſt, the ſuperſtructure, muſt fall. Take away truſt, the cement of ſociety; and ſociety, thus uncemented, muſt diſſolve.

One would not wiſh to live in a world where there is no mutual truſt, no regard for truth, no ſenſe of moral obligation. An

aſſociation

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aſſociation of foxes, a company of tygers, an aſſembly of wolves would fitly repreſent a ſociety of men deſtitute of honor, fidelity, religion, truth. Peace and harmony would fly from its confines, and its dwellings would reſound with the horrible din of perfidy, tumult, and deſtruction.

Every man, as a member of ſociety, and as a ſharer of its common privileges, has, from the fundamental laws of ſociety, an unalienable right to truth, that is, to an exemption from deceit—as all deceit, in ſuch a ſituation, is not only a violation of truth, but alſo a violation of juſtice, a wilful deprivation of another's right, a ſhameful revolt from original covenant, a daring attack on the fundamental conſtitution of ſociety, and manifeſtly inconſiſtent with the general good. For, the ſame right that I have to deceive another, another has to deceive me, and ſo has a third, and ſo has every man; and the ſame motives, which influence me to deceive, may alſo influence others—ſo that if you examine the conduct

duct of mankind, when this maxim is adopted, take a view of every man's favourite ſyſtem, and conſider in what variety of inſtances this man and the other will find it convenient to lie and deceive, you will diſcover, that there is ſcarcely an inſtance in which truth will not be violated; and, ſtripped of its beauty, will retain no reſemblance to its great advocate but this, that it will not have where to lay its head. SERM. XI.

But it may be ſaid; this reaſoning is falſe: for, without doubt, it is always lawful to do a leſs evil in order to promote a greater good, and to lie, when lying is more conducive to that good than truth. You are in a miſtake, my friend. For, beſides that no ultimate good can be promoted by a deliberate lie, equal to the evil which it occaſions, the government of the world, moral as well as natural, belongs to God; the laws of this government, of which truth is one, are the laws of God, and, like himſelf, fixed and unchanging. Conſequently, every

SERM. XI. every pretence for altering theſe laws, or any one of them, for the ſake of promoting a greater good, is a preſumptuous encroachment on the prerogative of God, a tacit declaration that the means which he uſes are not adequate to the ends he has in view; and that all things would ſoon run into confuſion, unleſs you were to afford your ſeaſonable help, by overturning thoſe laws, which, under the government of God, would overturn the general good. This concluſion plainly demonſtrates the futility of the objection.

The fact is, we are not to do evil that good may come—to lie, in order to promote truth—or to break the laws of God, the better to ſupport them. God forbid, that our conduct ſhould be ſo prepoſterous! Every lie is a moral evil. Every moral evil, by its being ſuch, ſufficiently demonſtrates its own unlawfulneſs. No circumſtance whatever can oblige a man to do that, which is morally, religiouſly, and eſſentially evil—becauſe if any circumſtance could vindicate

vindicate ſuch immorality, then others equally plauſible might be alledged; the ſanctity of truth would be violated; deceit, under the ſemblance of candor, would gradually increaſe; and a ſpirit of chicanery would, at laſt, annihilate both the principles of morality and religion. SERM. XI.

But I am abundantly aware, that to this doctrine it may be objected—ſurely, a lie cannot be ſo great an evil as you repreſent it, ſince, in the oracles of truth, the lie of a harlot is approved of by God, and the faith which produced it is rewarded by him. The conduct of the harlot is, I think, perfectly defenſible; perhaps the moſt defenſible part of her life, as eminent deeds of religion and goodneſs, from a woman of this character, are ſcarce to be expected. Not defenſible, however, upon this principle, that ſhe did a leſs evil, in order to promote a greater good; a principle, which will paſs current no where but among Jeſuits, of which ſort of men, alas! there

are

SERM. XI. are but too great a number, even among thoſe who deſpiſe Popery.

But the argument ſtands thus. Men are bound to each other by certain laws; the mutual obſervation of theſe laws eſtabliſhes the mutual obligation. But where theſe laws are violated on the one ſide, they ceaſe to be obligatory on the other, as it is highly abſurd to ſuppoſe, in any compact, that when the one party is looſe, the other ſhould be bound; and all ſociety, as has been ſaid, is founded upon compact. Now, if this principle is admitted, as it neceſſarily muſt be, then the caſe is perfectly plain. The perſons, whom Rahab deceived, had firſt violated theſe laws; hence it became lawful for her to violate them likewiſe. They had no right, in that particular, to know the truth from her; conſequently, ſhe was under no obligation to reveal it to them.

I ſhall illuſtrate this mode of reaſoning by a ſimilar inſtance. A man comes to your houſe, with the barbarous intention to murder

murder ſome perſon in it, with whom you are connected, or whom, by the laws of hoſpitality, you are bound to protect. Previouſly acquainted with his deſign, you meet him at the door, and when he aſks you if ſuch a perſon is in the houſe, you anſwer, *no*. I do not heſitate to ſay, that, upon the ſoundeſt principles both of religion and philoſophy, your anſwer is juſtifiable, and that you do not lie. SERM. XI.

Your anſwer is juſtifiable for this reaſon, *viz.* that this man, by the barbarity of his intention, by the breach of thoſe original obligations on which ſociety depends, and by a conduct totally ſubverſive of every principle, natural, moral, ſocial, and divine, has forfeited, in this inſtance, his right to truth, and ought of conſequence to be deceived. You are not bound to ſpeak truth to him, becauſe he has no right to truth—You are bound to deceive him, becauſe he ought to be deceived.*

Hence

* My barber, with his razor on my throat,
Aſks me for wealth, and freedom, and what not.

I promiſe

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Hence the ſame anſwer, which to an honeſt man, upon an honeſt buſineſs, would have been a lie, is no lie to him, becauſe the alteration of the circumſtances alters likewiſe the obligation. For it is plain, that want of truth, merely as ſuch, does not conſtitute a lie, ſince there are many things, not immediately founded on truth, which yet are not lies. Thus the ſimilès of the poet, the fables of the moraliſt, and even, perhaps, the parables of our Lord himſelf, have no immediate foundation on truth; and yet cannot, with any ſhadow of juſtice or propriety, be termed lies, as they are not deſigned to deceive. Now, as the ſting of death is ſin, ſo the ſting of a lie is unlawful deception.

Therefore, I humbly apprehend, that the true definition of a lie is not a ſuppreſſion of truth, merely as ſuch, but a ſuppreſſion.

I promiſe all, whilſt danger ties my hands;
For not the barber, but the rogue demands:
But, when fierce razor to ſafe ſheath withdrew,
I ſpoil'd his dancing and his fiddling too.

MARTIAL.

preſſion of truth on purpoſe to deceive ſome perſon or perſons, who, in that particular inſtance, ought not to be deceived. But to a man, who ought to be deceived, the only error, is the ſpeaking of the truth. SERM. XI.

That we may ſee this argument in the ſtrongeſt light, let it be conſidered, that nature eſtabliſhes no connection between words and ideas: that ſhe does not, the different words made uſe of in different languages, to expreſs the ſame idea, are a clear and demonſtrative proof. Words, therefore, are certain ſigns (as the tongue is the interpreter of the heart) applied to expreſs certain conceptions, not by the appointment of nature, but by the arbitrary appointment of ſociety; to which appointment all the members of that ſociety, where theſe ſigns are underſtood, either explicitly or virtually, give their conſent. Hence, the application of particular ſigns, to expreſs particular ideas, does not ſpring from the law of nature, but from the law of ſociety. Now, the juſt or unjuſt applica-

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tion of theſe ſigns conſtitutes either truth or lying.

Of truth there are two kinds; logical truth, and ethical or moral truth. Logical truth conſiſts in the connection between the idea and the word appointed by ſociety to expreſs it. Moral truth conſiſts in the connection between the conception, in the breaſt of the ſpeaker, and the right, which the hearer has, to underſtand that conception; and thus ſuperadds the idea of an obligation. The violation of the firſt is an untruth; the violation of the ſecond, a lie. The latter, in all inſtances, is criminal; the former, in many inſtances, is lawful and expedient.

When a man has a right to underſtand my conceptions, then I am bound, by the ſtrongeſt obligations, to apply the uſual ſigns in ſuch a manner, that my conceptions may be viſible to his underſtanding; and, if I apply them otherwiſe, I am guilty of a moſt infamous and deteſtable lie. But if a man has no right to underſtand my conceptions, then I am under no obligation

on to reveal them to him. And if he pe- SERM. XI.
remptorily inſiſts upon knowing theſe conceptions, when, perhaps, the knowledge of them might terminate in my own ruin, or the ruin of ſome perſon, whom, by the laws of nature, hoſpitality, or friendſhip, I am bound to protect, then I am at full liberty to diſguiſe my real ſentiments by applying the common ſigns in whatever way I pleaſe. For when the reaſons, which originally prompted ſociety to appoint theſe ſigns, no longer exiſt, there appears to be no reaſon, why I ſhould materially injure others, or myſelf, by publiſhing thoſe conceptions, which another has no right to know, and which, of conſequence, I am under no obligation to diſcloſe.

Hence it is evident, that to diſguiſe our real ſentiments from thoſe who have no title to underſtand them, for the ſake of protecting innocence, ſaving uſeful lives, or any other important purpoſe which cannot be obtained by open and direct expreſſions, is ſo far from deſerving the opprobrious

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appellation of a lie, that it ought to be applauded as a ſingular inſtance of prudence, humanity, and even piety. *

The ſum of all is this. To a man who has a right, whether tacit or expreſs, to know the truth from us, the truth we are obliged to communicate: but to a man, who has no right to know the truth from us, the truth we are not obliged to communicate; and in deceiving ſuch a man there is no criminality. Surely there is no crime in deceiving the Devil, when he is going about like a roaring lion, ſeeking whom he may devour. In as far, therefore, as any man reſembles the Devil in the character of a deſtroyer, in ſo far ſhould he be treated like him, and has no reaſon to complain when he is ſo.

I ſaid, that ſuch deception is no lie; and I have

* Not truth with open face, and open heart,
Is ſerviceable always, always wiſe;
But often 'tis in life the nobleſt art,
To know the prudent uſe of ſilence or diſguiſe.

PINDAR.

I have endeavoured to prove it by argument: I will now endeavour to prove it by example. SERM. XI.

The private alienation of property, without the conſent of the proprietor, is by the law of nations accounted robbery or theft. A man's ſword is his property; but when a man uſes his ſword for improper purpoſes—for the purpoſe of murder, for inſtance—it is lawful for you to take it from him, if you can, not becauſe you do a leſs evil in order to promote a greater good—no—but becauſe this man, by this daring outrage againſt the laws and welfare of ſociety, annihilates his property in that ſword, and for ever forfeits his right to it. Hence, it may be ſeized by any man, and uſed by him as his real and undoubted property, unleſs the application of it is otherwiſe directed by the laws of that ſociety to which he belongs. Thus it is plain, that the ſame action, which would have been theft or robbery, if done to a ſoldier in the lawful defence of his country, is no theft with

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regard to him; for all theft, as has been obſerved, conſiſts in the unjuſt alienation of property: but where a man has no property, you can take nothing from him.

Again; every man, by the law of nature, has a right to life, and the unjuſt deprivation of life conſtitutes murder. But as ſoon as any man is guilty of an offence, which renders his life inconſiſtent with the public ſafety, to it he that moment forfeits his right, and of it the party, injured by his villainy, may deprive him—though moſt nations, to prevent miſtakes, ſubſtitute a criminal court, and veſt it with proper authority, not ſo much to condemn a malefactor, as to find a man by legal proof to be a malefactor, and then to condemn him. In conſequence of this, no juſticiary court acts unwarrantably, when it takes away from any man a life, which he has no title to retain, and the retention of which is incompatible with the public good.

The whole of this argument my friends, is founded on the nature of ſociety: it is agreea-

agreeable to the ſtricteſt truth, and with the immutability of virtue is perfectly conſiſtent. SERM XI.

But after all, let us be duly informed, that a man has no right to truth, before we preſume to withold it from him. Let us have a well-grounded conviction, that he ought to be deceived, before we preſume to deceive him. For to deceive any man, when we are not fully perſuaded that he deſerves ſuch deception, is to act without judgment, and without conſcience, which, though perhaps a practice current in the world, yet is a practice by no means commendable, nor warranted by any law, that I know, either of God or man. What remains of this diſcourſe I ſhall leave to a future opportunity.

SERMON XII.

Againſt LYING.

COLLOSIANS iii : 9.

Lie not one to another.

IN a former diſcourſe upon this ſubject, I propoſed to ſhew SERM. XII.

1ſt. The unlawfulneſs of lying.
2dly. The baſeneſs of it.
3dly. The pernicious conſequences of it.
4thly. To conclude with ſome directions.

The

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The firſt of theſe I have endeavoured fully to illuſtrate.

2dly. I come to illuſtrate the baſeneſs of lying.

Of all the vices, which infeſt the world, lying is the moſt ugly and deformed. The man, who wallows in the puddle of drunkenneſs and ſenſuality, is only like a ſwine: but he that is a liar, is like the Devil; and like the Devil, too, in one of his worſt and moſt infamous properties.

Lying diſcovers a peculiar worthleſſneſs and turpitude of ſoul; ſuch a turpitude and worthleſſneſs as ſhew, that it is deſcended from the Devil, and not from God; as it is evidently impreſſed with his ſuperſcription, who was the father of liars from the beginning, and who, like a moſt unnatural father, will be the tormentor of his children to the end.

To be a liar is a ſtriking mark of a coward; for every man would ſpeak truth, if he durſt. To be a liar is an evident token of a fool; for every wiſe man will ſpeak truth,

truth. To be a liar is an infallible proof of a knave; for every honeſt man muſt ſpeak truth. Now, if any thing can conſtitute the baſeneſs of a character, it muſt be the combination of folly, knavery, and cowardice; which are three of the worſt qualities that can exiſt in conjunction. SERM. XII.

In nothing, however, is the baſeneſs of this vice more apparent, than in this, that to every mortal the appellation of a liar is moſt diſguſtful. * How inexpreſſibly baſe, then, muſt be the thing itſelf, when the very image of it is ſo ſhocking!

A lie is a weak thing; for it always needs another to ſupport it. A lie is an imprudent thing; for it often diſappoints itſelf. A lie is a deſtructive thing; for it at once ſtifles the voice, and relaxes the energy of conſcience. Baſe, indeed, muſt be the compound, of which weakneſs, worthleſſneſs, and imprudence, are the ſole ingredients.

To

* What fate ſo grievous to a free-born man,
As to be call'd a liar?

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To lie meanly is very pitiful; to lie dexterouſly is very difficult: this requires a good invention, a good memory, and a bad conſcience.—A good invention, to help us out in a ſtrait; a good memory, to prevent contradictions; a bad conſcience, to prevent remorſe. And though every liar muſt have the laſt, yet, God be thanked! few liars have the two firſt; a comfortable conſideration, indeed! For if theſe three qualities, in dangerous aſſemblage, ſhould all center in the ſame boſom, the conſequences to ſociety would be ſo fatal, that if the ghoſts of darkneſs were to embody themſelves, and commence inhabitants of this earth, their infernal influence could ſcarcely be more pernicious to the welfare of the world, than the dark deſigns of men whoſe characters correſpond to the above deſcription.

Take a view, my friends, of this vice in its various obliquities, and behold its infamy. Conſider fraud—what it is—how baſe a thing—to trepan the honeſt ſimpli-

city

city of our brethren, to lay ſchemes for their deſtruction; and, in wily ſilence, to diſturb the peace of mankind. Conſider hypocriſy—what it is—how vile—how mean—to have the face of a friend, and the heart of an enemy; the profeſſion of a ſaint, and the temper of a Devil; to wound with a ſmile, and to betray with a kiſs. Conſider flattery—what it is—how abſurd—how ſervile—to adorn the foibles of mankind with the colours of a rain-bow, and to gild ſuperficial virtue with borrowed charms. SERM. XII.

In other reſpects we only deceive men; but in this we excite men to deceive themſelves; intoxicate their minds with ridiculous ideas of their own ſignificancy; blow up the ſwelling ſails of pride; and make them throw off the garment of humility, which is the moſt becoming dreſs mortality can wear. Such a horrid monſter is this vice in all its ſhapes, that it needs only to be ſeen, that it may be hated; only to be diſcovered, that it may be deteſted.

3dly.

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3dly. I come to ſhew the pernicious conſequences which flow from lying.

The firſt evil which flows from it, is diſcovery. A known liar is the moſt deſpicable character on earth; he is the contempt of wiſe men, the ſcorn of fools, and abandoned by every man who is not abandoned himſelf.

Now, though it is true, that an expert liar may contrive to hide his falſhoods, for a while, under the maſk of ſecrecy, or the deteſtable ſhelter of a low cunning; yet it is as true, that, in ſpite of all diſguiſes and artificial colourings, a diſcovery of his real character is by no means impoſſible. The paper-wall may be eaſily broke; the ſpider's web may be eaſily penetrated.

Remember, that however acute you may be to deceive others, others will be as acute to detect you. God forbid, that all the wit and judgment in the world ſhould for ever lie on the wrong ſide, and be employed only in the cauſe of falſhood!

But though the liar ſhould reſt ſecure in his

his refuge of duplicity, and by a dexterous craft conceal his diſſimulation from the unwary ſpectator, yet in his heart there are funds of wretchedneſs, more than ſufficient to prevent him from being the object of envy. The villainous practice of lying keeps the mind for ever on the rack, and under the weight of perpetual torture. It begets perplexity and diſtruſt; and nouriſhes thoſe diſtractions, which ever ſpring from the fears of diſcovery. It extinguiſhes the tender endearments of friendſhip, and diſqualifies the mind for the impreſſions of religion. It fills the ſoul with anguiſh in the dark moments of diſtreſs, and ſpreads an everlaſting gloom on the bed of death.—Such is the portion of the falſe. "O my ſoul, come not thou into their "ſecret; unto their aſſembly, mine ho-"nour, be not thou united."* SERM. XII.

This is not all: there is another world; and there will be unravelled the dread

* Geneſis xlix, 6.

cataſtrophe.

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cataſtrophe. The ſoul is ſummoned to the bar of judgment. Let the man *now* try the friend of his former choice; as he has all along ſupported lying, let him try if lying at the laſt will ſupport him. But, alas! whatever entertainment lying may provide for the liar in this world, I am afraid it will provide him no agreeable entertainment in another. For though God makes his ſun to ſhine, and his rain to fall, on liars here; yet, be aſſured, he has a reward of a very different nature reſerved for them hereafter.

The ſoul, I ſaid, is ſummoned to the bar: but, full of darkneſs, ſtarts back from the face of light; and, full of falſhood, endeavours to ſcreen itſelf from the ſearch of truth. But, come forth it muſt, and ſtand its trial: O fatal, fatal day! The books are opened, in which the ſtatutes of eternity are written; thoſe ſtatutes, on whoſe favourable or unfavourable teſtimony, the happineſs or miſery of mankind is eternally ſuſpended. The ſtatutes, which

which respect the liar, are these*—" The SERM. XII.
" fearful and unbelieving, and the abomi-
" nable, and murderers, and whore-
" mongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and
" all liars, shall have their part in the lake
" which burneth with fire and brimstone;
" which is the second death." And again
—" † Without the gates of the city are
" dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers,
" and murderers, and idolaters, and who-
" soever loveth and maketh a lie." Upon this, the liar's conscience pleads guilty; the judge condemns; the sentence is executed; punishment commences: and the liar must depart to inherit his kingdom, a kingdom prepared for the devil and his angels. And just it is, that they, who have been the devil's children, should be the devil's heirs; that they, who have been partakers of his sin, should also be partakers of his punishment.

Indeed, when we compare the nature of the punishment with the nature of the sin

* Revelations xxi, 8. † Revelations xxii, 15.

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to which it is annexed, all that can be ſaid of a determined and habitual liar, when lodged in that dark apartment into which his iniquity has plunged him, is this, that if in the univerſe there was a worſe place than hell, hell itſelf would reject him; if in the univerſe there was a worſe ſociety than infernal ſpirits, the ſociety of infernal ſpirits would exclude him.

Now, my friends, if all that has been ſaid upon the unlawfulneſs, the baſeneſs, and the pernicious conſequences of lying, does not determine you to renounce it, then what can I ſay more? Nothing but this; lie and deceive, cheat and defraud, forge and diſſemble, till the period ſhall come when the miſeries, which flow from theſe damnable practices, ſhall make you eternally wiſh to renounce your exiſtence.

4thly. I ſhall conclude the diſcourſe with ſome obſervations and directions.

It is the juſt reproach of the age, that the heart and the tongue are in a ſtate of miſunderſtanding; that our words hold an unfair correſpondence with our thoughts

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It is the blemiſh of the times, that inſincerity is ſo faſhionable, that integrity is ſo much neglected. Alas! in theſe days of politeneſs and refinement, a ſcrupulous adherence to truth is by many conſidered as the characteriſtic of a clown; and, indeed, our proficiency in refinement is ſo conſpicuous, that you will not every day find a man with this mark of ruſticity.

If a man does not counterfeit more attachment to a ſtranger, than moſt men have for an acquaintance; and expreſs more affection for an enemy, than moſt men have for their friends; he is inſtantly branded with the odious appellation of a man, who wants breeding and delicacy; though the only want of breeding and delicacy is, that men ſhould be branded for being honeſt.

It is a mortifying thing to an upright and reaſonable mind, to ſee truth thus depoſed from her rightful ſovereignty, and falſhood erecting on her ruins its diſhonourable throne. To behold the artful wiles,

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the knaviſh tricks, the faithleſs promiſes, the unmeaning courteſies, the ſneaking condeſcenſions, the baſe compliances, and inglorious flatteries of men, is enough to make a man of ſenſe and candour grow ſick and weary of their company and adopt that pathetic wiſh of the Prophet *—"Oh "that I had in the wilderneſs a lodging-"place of way-faring men, that I might "leave my people, and go from them; "for they are all adulterers, an aſſembly "of treacherous men, and they bend their "tongues like their bows for lies: but "they are not valiant for the truth upon "the earth; for they proceed from evil to "evil, and they know not me, ſaith the "Lord. Take ye heed, every one of "his neighbour, and truſt ye not in any "brother: for every brother will utterly "ſupplant, and every neighbour will walk "with ſlanders. And they will deceive "every one his neighbour, and will not "ſpeak the truth: they have taught their "tongue

* Jeremiah ix: 2

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"tongue to ſpeak lies, and weary them-
"ſelves to commit iniquity."

In theſe ſpring-tides of diſſimulation, when truth ſeems to lye at its loweſt ebb, O remember, I beſeech you, my friends, the counſel of Joſhua to the people of Iſrael,* "Serve ye the Lord in ſincerity and truth." Whatever others do, be ye ſtedfaſt in this.

It is not worth your while to mind the faſhion of the world, becauſe "the faſhion "of the world paſſeth away." It is not worth your while to diſſemble, becauſe your time is ſo ſhort, your prize ſo mean. Should you gain the world by a lie, you would make nothing by the bargain; you would only exchange one lie for another: and if you ſhould loſe your ſoul by the exchange, where would be your profit?

Reflect much on the chriſtian religion, which is the doctrine of truth and ſoberneſs. Contemplate much the character of God, and view the beauties of truth in their

* Joſhua xxiv: 14.

SERM. XII. original ſource. Copy the bright pattern of your Saviour, who was void of guile; and, like travellers to Zion, "ſpeak the "truth from your hearts."

Let knaves and politicians laugh at your integrity; yet hold it faſt. Let infidels and fools mock at your hopes; yet glory in the proſpect of your crown. Let honeſty lay the foundation of your ſteps, and veracity give worth and credit to your ſpeech. Let uprightneſs of intention elevate your minds, and probity of conduct adorn your character. Let the ſweetneſs of your manners recommend you to men, and the firmneſs of your virtue recommend you to God.

Above all, be true to yourſelves; then it will follow, as the light does the ſun, that you cannot poſſibly be falſe to any man. The fidelity of your conduct will fit you, in this life, for the ſociety of mortals; and the rectitude of your diſpoſitions will fit you, in the next life, for the ſociety of angels. Thus, directed by conſcience, ſupported by integrity, and animated by

the

the proſpect of heaven, you will weather out, in peace, the ſtorms of mortality; vanquiſh with eaſe the king of terrors; ſtand with fortitude before the bar of heaven; there receive the ſentence of approbation from the judge, and be exalted to dwell for ever with the God of truth in that land of uprightneſs, where there is no deceit, and where there is no deceiver. SERM. XII.

O truth, thou bright image of the deity, lead us by thy influence through the tumults of life, light us by thy beams through the ſhadows of death, and land us in the regions of a bleſſed eternity! Amen.

SERMON XIII.

Againſt SWEARING.

JAMES v: 12.

But above all things, my brethren, ſwear not.

THE inherent malignity of this vice is abundantly manifeſt from the vehemence of the exhortation. Enormous, indeed, muſt be the practice, which calls forth from the inſpired author this important prohibition. But, it ſeems, the groſſneſs of the times

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times required it; and it is to be feared, that the groſſneſs of modern times ſtill ſtands in need of the old reproof.

Sorry am I to think, when I behold the current faſhion of the world, that a cuſtom, ſo childiſh and unmanly, ſhould give birth to ſermons againſt it. Sorry am I to think, that in an age when the ſciences are carried to the higheſt perfection; when liberality of ſentiment diſtinguiſhes this from the gloomy periods of ſuperſtition; and when our pretenſions to civility and politeneſs are at once ſo great, and ſo well founded; a vice ſo rude, ſo barbarous and ſhocking, ſhould find acceſs to our hearts, or appear in our converſation. Sorry am I to think, that a nation, reſcued from Egyptian darkneſs, emerged from heathenism, and enjoying the clear light of Chriſtianity, ſhould foſter in its boſom a vice, which darkneſs can alone excuſe, which chriſtianity reprobates, and even reaſon condemns.

To check the prevalence of this deteſtable

able habit, is the deſign of the text; and the ſame is the intention of the few following obſervations upon it. Theſe obſervations I ſhall compriſe under four heads. SERM. XIII.

1ſt. This vice of prophane ſwearing is inexcuſable.

2dly. It is contrary to the laws of religion.

3dly. It is contrary to the laws of politeneſs.

4thly. It is contrary to the happineſs of the individual.

But, previous to the diſcuſſion of theſe points, I will offer to your conſideration two remarks, which appear to be neceſſary for opening up the true ſenſe of the text.

The firſt remark relates to the introductory expreſſion—"but above all "things." This expreſſion muſt be underſtood, either in an abſolute, or a limited ſenſe. If it is underſtood in an abſolute ſenſe, the meaning will be, that the practice

of

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of prophane ſwearing is the greateſt of all crimes; and for this palpable reaſon, that it diſcovers a certain wantonneſs in vice. The man who deviates from the path of rectitude, and violates the divine commandments, from the violence of paſſion, or the ſtrength of temptation, has ſome excuſe. The infirmities of nature will plead his apology; and the good God, remembering that he is duſt, may in compaſſion overlook the offence.

But he who wilfully inſults the majeſty of God, violates his laws, tramples on his precepts, vilifies his name, and contemns his authority, without the leaſt ſhadow of provocation, diſcovers a prodigious defect in point of moral principle, and a total want of religion, a ſhameful diſregard of the creator, and an incurable depravity of heart. With great propriety, then, may this vice be ranked among the greateſt of tranſgreſſions—Well may it be conſidered as the firſt born of impiety.

If the expreſſion is underſtood in a limited

limited ſenſe, the meaning will be, not that ſwearing is the greateſt of all crimes, but only that it is a very great crime. The energy of the addreſs implies the weight of the duty, it tacitly enjoins; and points out the peculiar turpitude of the vice, againſt which it is openly levelled. SERM. XIII.

In the limited ſenſe I wiſh to underſtand it; for I cannot perſuade myſelf, that ſwearing is a crime of a deeper dye or more eſſential malignity, than theft, adultery, or murder. Why, then, does the apoſtle intimate its ſuperior deformity? I anſwer, becauſe it was then, as it is now, the prevailing diſtemper of the age. Conſequently, though it might be in its nature a ſmaller ſin than others, yet men's ſuperior propenſity to it might render it greater. For, as all ſin conſiſts in the will, ſo the guilt of every ſin is to be meaſured, not by the nature of the crime, but by the violence of the inclination from which it proceeds. Hence the Apoſtle, like a profound philoſopher and divine, accurately compares the circumſtances of things with

SERM. XIII. with the ſituation of perſons, and dexterouſly ſuits the admonitions of the ſpeaker to the diſpoſitions of the hearer. "But above all things, my brethren, ſwear not."

Were I to paraphraſe the text, I would do it thus: the practice of common ſwearing, my brethren, is a ſhocking vice; but ſhocking as it is, it is a vice, to the practice of which you are peculiarly addicted: therefore, above all things, guard againſt it; defend your weak ſide with peculiar care; then your ſtrong ſide will with more facility defend itſelf.

The 2d. obſervation relates to the text itſelf—"ſwear not." This expreſſion, like the other, muſt be underſtood, either in an abſolute or a limited ſenſe. If in the abſolute, then are prohibited all oaths without exception; if in the limited, only ſuch oaths as are circumſcribed by certain bounds.

The propriety of the firſt ſenſe does not readily appear; becauſe it is not to be imagined, that our Saviour wiſhed to deſtroy a thing

thing ſo proper, uſeful, and neceſſary, as lawful oaths. It has always been conſidered, by the moſt learned and impartial judges, as a fair way of aſcertaining truth, and diſcovering the intention of any book, whether ſacred or prophane, to compare one part of the book with another, and every part with the deſign of the whole. SERM. XIII.

Upon this principle, it is difficult to imagine, that our Saviour intended to ſuppreſs a cuſtom, authorized both by the command and example of God in the old teſtament, and warranted by himſelf and his apoſtles in the new. I ſaid, authorized, in the old teſtament, both by the command and example of God. Thus, in the ſixth chapter of Deuteronomy, you have this expreſſion—"Thou ſhalt fear the Lord "thy God, and ſerve him; and thou ſhalt "ſwear by his name." That is the command. In the twenty-ſecond chapter of Geneſis this paſſage occurs—"I have ſworn "by myſelf, ſaith the Lord." This is the example. I ſaid, warranted, in the new teſtament,

SERM XIII. teſtament, both by the practice of Chriſt and his Apoſtles. Thus, the Apoſtle Paul expreſſeth himſelf by the moſt ſolemn form of an oath, "God is my witneſs:" again, "God is my record:" and again, "before "God I lie not." Thus our Saviour, when arraigned at the bar of the high prieſt, declared upon oath, that he was the Son of God. For when Caiaphas, agreeable to the cuſtomary method of adminiſtering oaths, ſaid unto him—"I adjure thee by the living "God, that thou tell us whether thou be "the Chriſt, the Son of God"; he anſwered, "thou haſt ſaid"*—"Art thou the "Chriſt, the Son of the Bleſſed?" He ſaid "I am." †

From all this, it is difficult, nay even impoſſible, to conceive, that our Lord intended, by this paſſage of his Apoſtle, to aboliſh the uſe of oaths; of oaths, countenanced by ſuch indubitable authority: or that he, who was the light of the world, ſhould

* Matthew xxvi: 63: 64. † Mark xiv: 61: 62.

ſhould vary ſo far from himſelf, as to con- SERM. XIII.
demn, by his precept, the ſame action, which he approved by his example.

The abſolute ſenſe, then, being untenable, the limited ſenſe muſt be adopted; and this ſenſe, the text, properly underſtood, will ſupport. But as the text is only a copy, I ſhall have recourſe to the original, which, in the fifth chapter of Matthew, runs thus: "Ye have heard that it was ſaid by them of "old time, thou ſhalt not forſwear thyſelf; "but ſhalt perform unto the Lord thine "oaths: but I ſay unto you, ſwear not at "all: neither by heaven; for it is God's "throne: nor by the earth; for it is his "footſtool: neither by Jeruſalem; for it is "the city of the great king. Neither ſhalt "thou ſwear by thy head; becauſe thou "canſt not make one hair white or black. "But let your communication be, yea, yea; "nay, nay; for whatſoever is more than "theſe, cometh of evil."

In order to form a juſt judgment of counſels and maxims, it is neceſſary to compare

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the character and deſign of the inſtructor with the genius and circumſtances of the inſtructed. Now, it is material to obſerve, that the Jews, as hiſtory informs us, always ſwore in courts of juſtice by the name of God; in common converſation, by the name of a creature: and both theſe practices they apprehended to be lawful.

Hence it is plain, that if our Saviour had intended to aboliſh both, he would have mentioned both. He would not have paſſed by the principal, and dwelt on the inferior. But as he does not mention both, it is certain, that he does not mean to deſtroy both. As he confines himſelf to one, it is certain, that he means only to deſtroy one. "Ye have heard," ſays our Saviour, "that thou ſhalt not forſwear thyſelf;" that is, thou ſhalt not emit a falſe oath in judgment. This law was promulged by Moſes, and in its tendency was wiſe and good. But in this it is defective, that though it prohibits perjury, yet it does not ſufficiently guard againſt the practice of common

common ſwearing. Wherefore, to promote your advancement in virtue and felicity, I will make this addition to your old law; and ſolemnly exhort and command you, not only to abſtain from perjury, as Moſes told you; but alſo to abſtain, henceforth, from all your fooliſh and cuſtomary oaths —"Swear not at all: neither by heaven; "for it is God's throne: nor by the earth; "for it is his footſtool: neither by Jeruſa- "lem; for it is the city of the great king: "neither by thy head; becauſe thou canſt "not make one hair white or black." The contraſt, which our Saviour forms at the concluſion of the ſentence, abundantly juſtifies this explication—"But let your "communication be, yea, yea; nay, nay; "for whatſoever is more than theſe, cometh "of evil": or, as our author expreſſes it, "leſt ye fall into judgment or condem- "nation."

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Thus ſtands the proof from ſcripture; and, when joined to reaſon, it appears to be concluſive. Indeed, when we conſider the

SERM. XIII. various diſſenſions that prevail amongſt men; when we calmly reflect, that, in the courſe of human affairs, there are a thouſand obſcurities to be elucidated, facts to be proved, controverſies to be ſettled, frauds to be detected, and truths to be eſtabliſhed; we cannot heſitate a moment to adopt the Apoſtle's judicious aphoriſm, "that an "oath for confirmation is an end of all "ſtrife."*

I now proceed to the conſideration of the four particulars I mentioned, as tending to prove that the practice of common ſwearing is a practice truly deteſtable.

1ſt. It is without excuſe. It is without excuſe, becauſe without temptation. It is not founded on reaſon; It is not founded on paſſion: conſequently, it has no foundation at all.

It is not founded on reaſon. Reaſon teaches men to ſpeak ſenſe, and to ſpeak that ſenſe with proper connection and coherence. Swearing interrups and disjoints our converſation, and loads it with abſurd and

* Hebrews vi, 16.

and ſuperfluous terms. Reaſon teaches men not to offend: ſwearing is offenſive to every perſon of ſenſe and delicacy. Reaſon teaches men the higheſt reſpect to God: ſwearing vilifies his ſacred name, braves his tremendous greatneſs, and wantonly inſults his ſovereignty. It is not founded on reaſon, therefore fooliſh. SERM. XIII.

It is not founded on paſſion. There is no pleaſure ariſing from it; there is no profit annexed to it; there is no honour connected with it.

It is not eaſy to perceive what pleaſure can ariſe from the empty ſound of ſenſeleſs interjections; or what ſuperior entertainment can ſpring from the prophane ſound of GOD, DEVIL, DAMN, CURSE, than from the ſound of wax, wafers, pens, ink, or any other words of the ſame number of ſyllables.

It is not eaſy to perceive what profit is annexed to it. Whatever fortune may be made by perjury, I believe there never was a man who made a fortune by common

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ſwearing. It often happens, that men pay for their ſwearing; but it ſeldom happens, that they are paid for it.

It is not eaſy to perceive what honour or credit is connected with it. Does any man receive promotion becauſe he is a notable bluſterer? Or is any man advanced to dignity becauſe he is expert at profane ſwearing? Never. Low muſt be the character, which ſuch impertinence will exalt; high muſt be the character, which ſuch impertinence will not degrade. Inexcuſable, therefore, muſt be the practice, which has neither reaſon nor paſſion to ſupport it. The drunkard has his cups; the letcher, his miſtreſs; the ſatyriſt, his revenge; the ambitious man, his preferments; the miſer, his gold: but the common ſwearer has nothing; he is a fool at large; ſells his ſoul for nought; and drudges in the ſervice of the Devil *gratis*.

Swearing is void of all plea. It is not the native offſpring of the ſoul; nor interwoven with the texture of the body, nor any

any how allied to our frame. For, as a great man expreſſes it, "though ſome "men pour out oaths as if they were "natural, yet no man was ever born of a "ſwearing conſtitution"*—But it is a cuſtom, a low and paltry cuſtom, picked up by low and paltry ſpirits, who have no ſenſe of honour, no regard to decency; but are forced to ſubſtitute ſome rhapſody of nonſenſe, to ſupply the vacancy of good ſenſe. Hence, the fillineſs of the practice can only be equalled by the fillineſs of thoſe that adopt it. SERM. XIII.

Since, then, this vice is low, fooliſh, and abſurd, without reaſon, without paſſion, without pleaſure, without profit, without temptation, without excuſe; "above all things, my brethren, ſwear not."

The remainder of this diſcourſe I muſt reſerve to ſome future occaſion."

* Tillotſon.

SERMON XIV.

Againſt SWEARING.

JAMES v: 12.

But above all things, my brethren, ſwear not.

THE firſt argument againſt ſwearing, *viz.* that it is inexcuſable, I conſidered on a former occaſion. SERM. XIV.

I proceed now to the ſecond argument againſt it, which is, that ſwearing is contrary to the laws of religion.

Religion,

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Religion, my friends—whatever that man may think, who is too licentious to be regular, or too wiſe to be good—Religion is an important thing, a divine ſtudy, an honorable accompliſhment, and merits more reſpect, than, we have reaſon to believe, it generally meets with from the bulk of mankind. Religion is too much deſpiſed by moſt men; which conduct ſhews moſt men to be truly deſpicable: deſpicable in point of ſolid judgment; deſpicable in point of refined taſte: for judgment muſt ever approve what is excellent; taſte muſt ever reliſh what is amiable.

This ſpiritual coldneſs, and almoſt general want of religious principle, introduce into the world a thouſand practices, unworthy of the chriſtian, unworthy of the man; practices, which a perſon of any modeſty muſt bluſh at; practices, which, a perſon, poſſeſſed of the leaſt ſenſe or delicacy, muſt heartily deteſt.

The man, it is true, who pays as little regard to his conduct as he does to his conſcience, may contend, that it is not a juſt

juſt and ſatisfactory argument againſt ſwearing, that it is contrary to the laws of religion; becauſe as he deſpiſes religion, ſo muſt he alſo deſpiſe every counſel which religion ſuggeſts. But it is as true, that to the man, who has not yet erazed from his heart every impreſſion that is God-like, it muſt be to eternity an unanſwerable objection againſt ſwearing, that it is contrary to the laws of religion.

Religion, in brighteſt colours, exhibits to our view the nature and perfections of God, the profound reverence due to his name, and the guilt and infamy of profane ſwearing. It exhibits likewiſe, with irreſiſtible conviction, his poſitive and peremptory commandment, which lays this abſurd vice under an expreſs and everlaſting prohibition.

Now, for any man, in the aweful preſence of God, and in direct contradiction to his commandment, with a rude and daring violence to attack his nature, controvert his authority, and deſpiſe his law, is

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is ſuch a pitch of profligacy, as, prior to experience, conjecture itſelf could not have reached. Under the ſacred garb of religion, to burleſque the name of God, and bring it down to a level with the inſignificant words of our inſignificant diſcourſe, is a practice ſo ſhameful, ſo indecent, and ſo impious, that there is not a religion upon earth which can ever juſtify it—not even the religion of infidels, if they may be ſaid to have any.

I beſeech you then, my friends, let the matter be cooly conſidered: let religion and ſwearing be weighed in the balance: let that be adopted which is found ſolid; let that be rejected which is found wanting. Here is religion on the right; there is ſwearing on the left; chuſe which you pleaſe; but be contented with one; for, be aſſured, the two can never exiſt in conjunction.

Since, then, ſwearing is contrary to the nature of God, to his expreſs commandment, and to the ſpirit of religion,

" Above

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"Above all things, my brethren, ſwear "not."

3dly. Swearing is contrary to the laws of politeneſs. True politeneſs, I am much afraid, is as unfaſhionable as true religion. It may however appear new, that the pulpit ſhould teach it. But, I am perſuaded, this ſurpriſe will vaniſh, when it is conſidered, that civility is an eſſential ingredient of a chriſtian's character, and that gentleneſs is the moſt graceful ornament of virtue.

Our ideas of politeneſs, like thoſe of religion, are in general too confined. We often confound its outworks with its eſſence; and ſo imagine, that good manners conſiſt in frothy compliments, formal ceremony, and ſhewy parade. Egregious miſtake! True politeneſs, like true religion, does not conſiſt in modes and forms; but in an obligingneſs of temper, a modeſty of addreſs, a ſweetneſs of behaviour, an unwillingneſs to offend, and a deſire to pleaſe—

SERM. XIV. pleaſe—a deſire to pleaſe in a manner conſiſtent with truth and innocence.

A man, therefore, poſſeſſed of this amiable diſpoſition, will conſult, upon every occaſion, the temper, genius, ſituation, and character of every perſon with whom he converſes; will exert himſelf to render his converſation acceptable; and from the remoteſt idea of giving to his fellow creatures unneceſſary pain, will ſhrink back with diſguſt and horror.

I acknowledge indeed, that, in a company of profeſſed ruffians, ſwearing is not unpolite; becauſe none is affronted by it but God, and God in that company is not ſuppoſed to be preſent.

But it is highly uncivil to uſe ſuch rude and ſavage diſcourſe in a company, in which there are any perſons of a rational and ſober caſt of mind, who have a regard to God, and a regard to decency, a ſenſe of duty, and a ſenſe of ſhame; becauſe ſuch perſons cannot be ſuppoſed to hear, with patience, their religion prophaned, their

Saviour

Saviour abuſed, their God inſulted. And it is rude to the laſt degree, to uſe ſuch ruſtic and bluſtering language in the preſence of ladies and clergymen; becauſe without offering violence to the delicacy of their feelings, and hurting the dignity of their character, they cannot poſſibly brook ſuch leproſy of converſation, or reliſh ſuch infamous enormities of ſpeech. It is impoſſible, therefore, that a man of true politeneſs can ever fall into ſo odious a vice, or give way to a practice ſo injurious to civility. SERM. XIV.

Yet it is ſurpriſing to find, how many pretenders to this character weakly betray their unfitneſs to ſupport it. What ſhall we ſay? Like many others, they are quacks in their profeſſion; painted ſepulchres, gilded without, but deformed within; and have a form of politeneſs (as ſome have of godlineſs) but deny its power; while, to their perpetual diſgrace, the aſs's ears appear through the lion's ſkin.

Since, then, ſwearing is contrary to the ſpirit

SERM. XIV. ſpirit of civility, the rules of delicacy, and the laws of politeneſs, " Above all things, my brethren, ſwear not.

4thly. and laſtly; Swearing is contrary to the happineſs of the ſwearer. Other arguments are more general; this is an argument confined to the individual, and particularly levelled at the heart. Every man, by an invincible neceſſity of nature, wiſhes to ſecure his own happineſs; every man anxiouſly endeavours to guard againſt the reverſe. Self-love is a powerful principle, and actuates the mind with irreſiſtible influence.

Hence, it is impoſſible to ſuggeſt any motive more apt to induce a man to refrain from ſwearing (that barbarous and odious practice) than to convince him, that it is naturally ſubverſive of his own felicity; and this conviction, a few moments of ſerious reflection will infallibly produce. For, in conſidering the conſequences of this vice, it immediately occurs, that it at once wounds the reputation, and

deſtroys

deſtroys the peace of a man's own mind. SERM. XIV.

It wounds the reputation. A good reputation is of the utmoſt conſequence—"It is better than precious ointment."* Without it, little happineſs can we enjoy from ſociety; nay, with reſpect to ſociety, reputation may, in fact, be ſaid to be the man. Now, from the poſſeſſion of this invaluable bleſſing the abominable practice of ſwearing for ever cuts us off.

Swearing diſcovers a want of regard to God, and a want of regard to his authority; for he who has a juſt regard to both, will neither inſult the one, nor deſpiſe the other: the ſwearer, therefore, muſt be deſtitute of character in the religious ſenſe.

Swearing betrays a contempt of the laws of ſociety, which forbid it; for he who has a juſt reſpect for theſe, will not wantonly break them for the vileſt of purpoſes: the ſwearer's character, therefore, muſt ſuffer in the ſocial ſenſe.

* Eccleſiaſtes vii, 1.

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Swearing indicates a diſregard to the feelings of others, and the principles of thoſe with whom we converſe; for he who pays a juſt attention to theſe, will not ſhock them without neceſſity: the ſwearer's character, therefore, muſt decay in the friendly or companionable ſenſe.

Swearing implies a want of truth; for he who ſwears to confirm what he ſays, ſuppoſes that his credit cannot ſtand upon its own bottom, but, like a crazy fabrick, needs a prop to ſupport it: the ſwearer's character, therefore, muſt periſh in the moral ſenſe. For he who has not truth, is not ſuppoſed to have any virtue: a man who has no conſcience in one thing, is not likely to be overburdened with it in another. For my own part, I would much rather believe an honeſt man upon his word, than a common ſwearer upon his oath.

Thus, ſwearing, wounds the character in every ſenſe; and he who has no character whatever

whatever elſe he may have, is a poor man. SERM. XIV.

Swearing, likewiſe, deſtroys the peace of a man's own mind. Peace of mind, upon ſolid grounds, is the choiceſt gift of heaven; the moſt valuable preſent which man can receive from his creator. It is a jewel of ineſtimable price, and more to be eſteemed than mountains of ſilver. Its preſence inſpires joy and chearfulneſs; its abſence, dejection and remorſe. Now, this curſed practice of ſwearing throws a dark cloud over this internal ſerenity; with a cruel hand, robs the mind of its ſweeteſt treaſure; and leaves it thus plundered of its all, to languiſh in the dark dungeon of deſpair.

Alas! the giddy moments of life will ſoon be over; and the ſoul, which has long been wandering through the devious wilds of iniquity, muſt return home; (for as thoughtleſſneſs has its courſe, ſo muſt it have its period; and where thoughtleſſneſs ends, reflection begins) and when it

SERM. XIV. returns, beholds its ruinous and miſerable ſtate, and coolly reflects upon its ſhocking ingratitude to God, its frequent abuſes of his name, and its repeated profanations of his word; with what horror will it tremble at the remembrance of its former folly, ſhudder at its preſent guilt, and ſtart back from the proſpect of its future miſery?

The remaining ſhadows of former frolicks will miniſter, I fear, but little comfort to a ſoul, agitated with the pangs of guilt, overwhelmed with diſtreſs, and tortured with the ſtings of a vengeful conſcience.*

And to cloſe all; when the concluding ſcene draws nigh, and the ſoul is juſt ruſhing into the preſence of its awful judge—Merciful God! what peace, what comfort,

* But why muſt thoſe be thought to 'ſcape, that feel
Thoſe rods of ſcorpions, and thoſe whips of ſteel,
Which conſcience ſhakes, when ſhe with rage controuls,
And ſpreads amazing terrors through their ſouls?
Not ſharp revenge, nor hell itſelf, can find
A fiercer torment than a guilty mind.

JUVENAL.

comfort, what hope can chear it? Alas! alas! night and darkneſs ſpread their gloom upon it; ſtorms and tempeſts diſturb the ſky; guilt and fear unfold a direful proſpect of futurity. Miſerable man! who to gratify an idle humour, or to pleaſe ſome worthleſs companion, couldſt find in thy heart to forfeit the favour of thy God, and hazard thy fate through a dread eternity. SERM. XIV.

Since, then, the cuſtom of profane ſwearing ſtabs the reputation, murders the peace, and ruins the happineſs of man—"Above all things, my brethren, ſwear not." Amen!

SERMON XV.

Againſt DRUNKENNESS.

PROVERBS XX: 1.

Wine is a mocker; ſtrong drink is raging; and whoſoever is deceived thereby is not wiſe.

THE text condemns drunkenneſs, and ſhews its abſurdity; or, in other words, condemns drunkenneſs by ſhewing its abſurdity. SERM. XV.

The expreſſion is curious—"wine is a mocker"—that is, makes a fool of a man.

SERM. XV. "Strong drink is raging"—that is, makes him mad. The one expoſes him to contempt and ridicule; the other heats his blood, inflames his paſſions, and drives him headlong into a thouſand enormities. The concluſion, which the wiſe man draws, is this—"Whoſoever is deceived thereby "is not wiſe—that is, that man is a fool, who takes that which he knows will make a fool of him; that man is a fool, who takes that which he knows will make him mad. A poet of our own iſland has an expreſſion to the ſame purpoſe—"Strange! "that men ſhould take that into their "mouth, which ſteals away their brains."*

In handling this ſubject, I will endeavour to ſhew

1ſt. What drunkenneſs is.

2dly. That it is a crime.

3dly. The evils which reſult from it.—By which it will appear, that he who is deceived by it, is not wiſe.

1ſt. I am to ſhew in what drunkenneſs conſiſts. In deſcribing the nature of this vice

* Shakeſpeare.

vice, I would not wiſh to be too confined. Inſtructions may be as faulty in being too contracted, as in being too liberal. I will, therefore, ſtudy to keep cloſe to truth. SERM. XV.

God has formed mankind for ſociety; and, to qualify them for its mutual endearments, has implanted in the breaſt of every individual a ſpirit of ſocial affection. To cultivate this is his duty; and to cultivate it with propriety is his happineſs. So far, therefore, as drink, diverſions, or company, tend to promote this ſpirit, and to cement the ſouls of men together, in a way conſiſtent with religion and innocence, they are commendable, as they at once gratify a natural propenſity, and promote the improvement of a ſocial principle. But the moment that the love of liquor degenerates into exceſs, or grows into a habit, it is highly unwarrantable, and conſtitutes that vice which is called drunkenneſs.

But it may be ſaid, that it is difficult to determine the preciſe moment when ſobri-

ety

SERM. XV.

ety ends, and drunkenneſs begins. This, I confeſs, will ever appear difficult to him who thinks ſuperficially, but muſt ever be obvious to him who thinks juſtly.

For it is evident, in the firſt place, that as ſoon as liquor overcomes a man ſo far, as to take from him at once both the uſe of his head, and the uſe of his feet, he falls under the condemnation of the text.

It is evident, in the ſecond place, that it is time for a wiſe man to retire, when the company, with which he mixes, turns rude and unmannerly; when ill nature and fooliſh converſation ſupply the room of politeneſs and good ſenſe; becauſe ſuch conduct is totally inconſiſtent with the ſocial ſpirit, and deſtroys the very principle which it is intended to ſupport.

It is evident, in the third place, that as, in gaming, a man ought never to play for ſuch a ſum, but that he would rather wiſh to win the game than the money; ſo in this, a man ought never to regard liquor ſo much as to prefer it to his friend. I do not

not mean what men ſay—Alas! their words are no more to be depended upon than themſelves. But I appeal to their hearts; for, of all the drunkards I ever met with, I do not remember to have met with one ſo honeſt as to acknowledge, that he loved liquor merely for its own ſake. SERM. XV.

It is evident, in the fourth place, that every man, who prefers his conſcience to his cups, will ever keep himſelf at ſo great a diſtance from the confines of vice, that he will abridge himſelf of ſome degrees of pleaſure which perhaps he might innocently enjoy, rather than, by going to the utmoſt limits of what is lawful, he ſhould run the ſmalleſt riſk of being caught in the ſnare.

The ſum is, to be pleaſant with diſcretion, and chearful with prudence, is not a crime. But that drunkenneſs is one, I proceed, in the ſecond place, to ſhew.

I know, that ſome men, who with great dexterity ſuit their principles to their practice,

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practice, pretend, that drunkenneſs is not a crime, becauſe it does not proceed from any unfriendly or malevolent paſſion. But they muſt be very ſhallow and ſuperficial thinkers who can argue thus; for whoever exerts the powers of reflection in a proper manner, will find it to be a crime—a crime againſt the law of nature, the law of Chriſtianity, and the law of ſociety.

It is a crime againſt the law of nature. Certain deſires are planted in our conſtitution, and theſe deſires are preſented with certain objects. Nature herſelf limits each indulgence; and, like an index, points out how far to go, and where to ſtop. Every action, therefore, which tranſgreſſes theſe limits, muſt be a crime againſt that law which preſcribes them. Hence it is evident, that drunkenneſs is a crime, becauſe it offers violence to nature, abuſes its bleſſings, tramples on its authority, and deſpiſes its law. Temperance is a fundamental law of nature; drunkenneſs is a tranſgreſſion of this law. Nature means, that we ſhould be

be men; drunkenneſs ſhews, that we are beaſts. For, ſays a great divine, "no "man will be a drunkard, but a beaſt of "burden; and he is the greater beaſt of "the two, who chuſes to carry his bur-"den in his belly, rather than on his "back"* SERM. XV.

Drunkenneſs is a crime againſt Chriſtianity. The Chriſtian law is a law of purity, and ſtrictly prohibits all kind of licentiouſneſs. It reprobates drunkenneſs in the ſtrongeſt terms, and, by a particular ſtatute, excludes all its votaries from the kingdom of heaven—"Nor thieves, nor "covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, "nor extortioners, ſhall inherit the king-"dom of God."† Now, this is a poſitive law of the omnipotent legiſlator of the univerſe, and of conſequence muſt be obligatory upon all his intelligent and moral ſubjects, who are admitted to the knowledge of the ſacred records. Drunkenneſs, therefore,

* South. † 1 Corinthians. vi, 10.

SERM. XV. therefore, is a manifeſt crime againſt the law of Chriſt: and that we are all Chriſtians, is taken for granted; for if we are not, our tongues muſt belie the ſentiments of our hearts.

Drunkenneſs is a crime againſt the law of ſociety. In ſociety every action is a crime, which, if every member of ſociety were to commit, would be inconſiſtent with the public good, or would terminate in the public confuſion. Hence it is obvious, drunkenneſs is a crime; becauſe if every man were a drunkard, this in a moment would diſſolve ſociety, degrade us from a ſtate of civilization into a ſtate of barbariſm, and convert us from an aſſembly of men into a herd of ſwine—So that whether you conſider drunkenneſs by the law of nature, the law of religion, or the law of ſociety, you will find it equally repugnant to each, and equally deſtructive of all.

I proceed now, in the third place, to point

point out the evils which reſult from drunkenneſs. SERM. XV.

1ſt. It deſtroys our health.

2dly. It deſtroys our ſubſtance.

3dly. It deſtroys our character.

4thly. It deſtroys our time.

5thly. It deſtroys our ſoul.

1ſt. Drunkenneſs deſtroys our health. Health is in itſelf a moſt valuable bleſſing, and heightens the reliſh of every other enjoyment. It brightens the proſpects of life, and inſpires the heart with mirth and chearfulneſs. It ſupports the ſoul amidſt the gloom of adverſity, and gives an additional luſtre to the ſunſhine of proſperity. It ſweetens the toils of painful labour, and ſoothes the breaſt chagrined with diſappointment. It produces concord among the members of the body, and harmony among the faculties of the ſoul—Like an inſtrument of muſick, properly tuned, which forbids each jarring note, and charms the ear with melody.

The abſence of health, which is termed ſickneſs,

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ſickneſs, is in itſelf a natural evil, and the ſource of real uneaſineſs. It weakens the tone of the conſtitution, and caſts a damp upon the ſpirits. It frets the heart with grief and ſorrow, and overclouds the fancy with fear and terror. It adds new ſharpneſs to every pain, and palls the flavour of every pleaſure. It ſullies the native complexion of the mind, and deſtroys the harmony of life—As a harp, when out of tune, or touched by an unſkilful hand, grates the ear with ſounds of diſcord, and balks the expectation of thoſe that hear it.

Every practice, therefore, which introduces this melancholy ſcene, and terminates in the ruin of the body, which is the habitation of the ſoul, ought to be avoided with the moſt watchful circumſpection. Now, drunkenneſs has this fatal tendency. We ſhould, therefore, regard it with the ſtrongeſt averſion, and ſhrink from it with horror. Compared to it, a field of battle is a place of ſafety. Drunkenneſs throws open

open all the ſluices of diſeaſe; from which SERM. XV.
fly forth, as from Pandora's box, gravels, fevers and conſumptions, the gout, ſerpigo and the rheum, with all the direful catalogue of woes, too tedious to enumerate, too ſhocking even to mention.

Drunkenneſs curdles the blood, unbraces the nerves, cloys the appetite, inflames the eyes, exhauſts the ſpirits, ſcorches the vitals, and deſtroys the energy of the animal ſyſtem. Drunkenneſs ſoon wears down the firmeſt body, and quickens it's journey to corruption. It treaſures up a ſtore of maladies, and lays a ſure foundation of future pain. It renders the aids of the divine and the phyſician neceſſary, though often fruitleſs; and infallibly occaſions untimely death. For proof of this, I beſeech you, my friends, to appeal to experience. Behold a young man, void of underſtanding and entangled in the ſnares of debauchery, enter upon this practice with precipitation. Trace him through the various ſtages of his progreſs, and you

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will ſoon find, that having exhauſted many years in the compaſs of a few, and worn out the organs of enjoyment with riot and exceſs, he is arrived at the late autumn of his conſtitution, while he is only in the ſummer of his days, and has prepoſterouſly united the hoar froſt of winter to the greenneſs of the ſpring. For drunkenneſs is a vice, the unhappy ſlaves of which ſeldom live above half their days. What a mortifying view of human wretchedneſs does this exhibit—to ſee the infirmities of age, joined to the foibles of youth! and a man, ſcarce advanced to the meridian of life, withered by vice, and ſhattered by diſeaſe, become an eaſy prey to deſtruction!

2dly. Drunkenneſs deſtroys the ſubſtance. A ſtate of independence, ſo far as that is attainable, is the neareſt approach to the deity, and of conſequence the neareſt approach to happineſs. It frees the ſoul from fretful ſolicitude, and cauſes her to rejoice in her portion. It raiſes the mind

mind above the mean arts of adulation, and teaches it to venerate that only which is truly venerable. It exhibits an ample ſcene of comfort to ourſelves, and unfolds a large proſpect of utility to others. It lays within our reach all the eſſential enjoyments of life, and the power of doing good, the chief enjoyment of all. A prudent benevolence, joined to abundance, is like a copious ſpring, which is ever diſpenſing, yet ever full. SERM. XV.

A ſtate of dependence is a ſtate of want, and a ſtate of want is a ſtate of miſery. It is a ſtate ungrateful to the man of feeling, and thwarts and oppoſes the generous movements of the ſoul. It cauſes it to deſcend from its original greatneſs, and creep, unnoticed, through the paths of obſcurity. It ſets the bleſſings of life above our reach, and reduces us to beggary. It makes the preſent moment dreary and irkſome, and ſpreads a gloom upon the future. It ſubjects a man to a thouſand ſervilities, and expoſes him to a

SERM. XV. thouſand affronts—Like a barren tree on the mountain-top, which, deſtitute of nouriſhment within, is beheld with contempt by all around.

Dependence is a condition truly deplorable. I pity the man, the hapleſs man, involved in it. Does drunkenneſs produce it? Then drunkenneſs we ſhould deteſt. Drunkenneſs diſſipates our fortune, waſtes our ſubſtance, and gulls us of our money. It ſlackens our endeavours to procure a livelihood, cuts the nerves of induſtry, and gives up the ſoul to idleneſs—that is, in other words, preſents it to the Devil. It is always contracting debt, but never diſcharging it; always borrowing, but never paying, till the man is ruined, and one payment for all ſinks him in poverty, deſpair, and death.

Here you may alſo appeal to experience. How often have you ſeen a man ſet out upon the road of life with opulence, ſtopped and robbed by this plundering vice, caſt at length on the bounty of the world,

world, and forced to ſolicit aid from the cold hand of charity! And if he had a family, merciful heaven! what heart did not bleed for their calamity? How many rich and wealthy cities, infected with this diſtemper, have been reduced to poverty! or ſeized by their watchful enemies, in the moments of debauch, have been ſacked and pillaged and laid in the duſt! How many great and flouriſhing empires, blaſted by intemperance and luxury, have, like a ſickly roſe, withered of themſelves and died! Such are the fatal effects of intemperance! So dreadful the concluſion of debauchery! SERM. XV.

Let the man, therefore, whom bounteous heaven has bleſſed with ſubſtance, apply it to better, to nobler purpoſes. By it, he may bring from obſcurity ſome poor relation, or raiſe from the duſt ſome deſtitute friend. By it, he may comfort the heart of ſome deſolate widow, or train up in the paths of virtue ſome helpleſs orphan. By it, he may become, like Job,

SERM. XV. the father of the poor, and the patron of diſtreſſed merit.

This is a conduct, which will communicate ſerenity to the conſcience in the moſt ſolemn hours of reflection, and ſupport the ſoul at a period, when drunkenneſs will diſpatch its ſlaves to inhabit a country, where there is not a drop of water to cool their tongue.

The ſequel of this diſcourſe I muſt reſerve for another opportunity.

SERMON

SERMON XVI.

Againſt DRUNKENNESS.

PROVERBS xx; 1.

Wine is a mocker; ſtrong drink is raging; and whoſoever is deceived thereby is not wiſe.

IN a former diſcourſe, I attempted to ſhew in what drunkenneſs conſiſts; that it is a crime; and that from it, two great evils, ſickneſs and poverty, infallibly reſult. SERM. XVI.

I proceed now to point out a third evil,

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which flows from drunkenneſs: It deſtroys the character. A good character is an unſpeakable felicity, a jewel of ineſtimable worth, a comfort, without which life, like a blaſted lily, droops its head, and languiſhes upon the ſtalk. A deſire of reſpect is a native propenſity, and from the nature of a ſocial being totally inſeparable. We can with as much eaſe annihilate our very eſſence, as we can annihilate our deſire of approbation. A fair reputation, therefore, at once gratifies a natural appetite, and procures us credit with the world: It eſtabliſhes a ſolid foundation of eſteem, and paves the way to love and friendſhip: It commands congratulation in the bright hours of proſperity, and calls forth ſympathy in the dark moments of diſtreſs: It is the anchor of the ſoul in every tempeſt, and its ſtay and ſupport under every calamity:—Like a ſtaff in the pilgrim's hand, which bears him up through the rugged paths of a tedious journey.

The

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The reverſe of reputation is infamy, and a ſtate of infamy is a ſtate of wretchedneſs. It thwarts the native inclinations of the ſoul; and leaves it, dejected, to pine in ſilence: It deſtroys each foundation of rational eſteem, and ſhuts up each avenue to friendſhip: It gives additional languor to a languid life, and ſtamps a dulneſs on the face of mirth: It nips the flowers of ſocial happineſs, and robs us of every enjoyment—As the winter blaſt ſtrips the foreſt of its leaves, and ſpoils the glories which it received from the gentle ſpring.

Now, do all theſe miſchiefs flow from drunkenneſs? All: then what man, in the poſſeſſion of his underſtanding, would not guard againſt its allurements, and reprobate the idea of falling a victim to its witchcraft? Drunkenneſs gives a blemiſh to the life, blots the fair face of good report, injures reputation, and gives a mortal ſtab to character. It gives offence to the

SERM. XVI. the wiſe and good, and terminates in the loſs of all truſt and credit.

Here, too, you may conſult experience. Where did the wiſe man ever truſt the drunkard with ſecrets of importance? Or where did the good man ever make him his companion? Alas! the feelings of humanity revolt againſt ſuch a connection; againſt chuſing, for a friend, what is not a man, but a beaſt diſguiſed in human form. For whoever yields himſelf a ſlave to drunkenneſs, that moment relinquiſhes the dignity of his original ſtation, and joins a brotherhood of an inferior ſpecies. How many thouſands of mankind, who in the early periods of life have been reſpected for their wit and judgment, overthrown at laſt by this inglorious vice, have ſunk into the loweſt depths of diſgrace, and, from objects of admiration, have become the objects of contempt!—Left, on the world's wide ſtage, a prey to folly, pain and death, without character, without friends, without hope.

4thly.

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4thly. Drunkenneſs deſtroys our time. Time is the gift of God, and the price of eternity. It is the ſchool of diſcipline to human minds, and on their proficiency in this ſchool their immortality depends. The right improvement of time yields the greateſt bleſſings, and fills the ſoul with the moſt exquiſite delights. It gives a proper reliſh to the enjoyments of youth, and ſweetens the dregs of declining age: It renders the bright day of proſperity ſtill more bright, and miniſters conſolation in the dark night of affliction: It makes the pleaſures of earth a ſweet foretaſte of the pleaſures of heaven, and death an eaſy paſſage to immortal life—Like a blooming flower, which diſplays its opening beauties in the warmth of the ſun, and then ſheds forth its fragrant odours at the cloſe of day.

Waſte of time diſcovers a diſregard to the gifts of providence, and a contempt of immortality, It is the offſpring of the greateſt folly, and the ſource of the greateſt

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teſt miſery. It begets in men a habit of idleneſs, and unfits them for the buſineſs of life. It begets in men a habit of thoughtleſneſs, and unfits them for the buſineſs of death. But though the giddy moments of life may diſſipate attention, and the ſanguine purſuits of pleaſure may make men forget themſelves; yet the cooler hours of reflection will convince them of their miſtake, and with tears make them repent of their fatal prodigality; a prodigality, which ſpreads a gloom upon the bed of languiſhing, and gives a double hideouſneſs to the king of terrors—as a man, juſt ſetting out from his native home to dwell in a remote and foreign land, when on ſhore looks back, with a heart-felt ſigh beholds his country and friends, and bids them both farewell.

Whatever, then, leads to theſe diſmal conſequences, like wiſe men we ſhould deſpiſe, like good men we ſhould deteſt. Drunkenneſs has evidently this fatal tendency. We ſhould, therefore, regard it as

as an evil more to be avoided, than the bite of a tarantula, the whining of a crocodile, or the faſcination of an enchantreſs. Drunkenneſs murders time, waſtes our pureſt years in the groſſeſt impurity, diſſipates our beſt days in the worſt purſuits, and proſtitutes our moſt precious moments to the vileſt and moſt ignoble purpoſes. SERM. XVI.

But here, alſo, let experience ſpeak. What valuable time has not drunkenneſs deſtroyed! How many years have been ſunk in that deceitful whirl-pool! How many monſters of mankind make a trade of ebriety, and devote their lives to the employments of that infamous vocation! Whilſt others work in the day, they work in the night. Darkneſs is the proper habitation of her children. "They that are "drunken, are drunken in the night"* Then they meet, to drown their ſenſes, ſtupify their reaſon, and revel in the ſuperfluity of naughtineſs, till the arrival of the

* 1 Theſſalonians v, 7.

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the morning-light diſſolves the ſwaggering ſociety, and chaces away the peſtilent diſturbers of the night. Then weary and fatigued, like a horſe with his burden, they ſtagger to their beds, where diſtracted with feveriſh heat, and diſturbed with frantic dreams, the effects of a guilty mind and an overcharged body, they toſs and tumble till the approach of night: then they make a ſhift to riſe, ſhake off their drowſineſs, and return to their cups again, as a dog to his vomit, or a ſow to her mire. Noble employment indeed, for rational beings, to ſleep one half of their time, and revel the other! Noble preparation for eternity, to be always engaged in rioting and drinking!

How many, again, who, though they are not wholly immerſed in intemperance, but retain ſome regard for decency and honour, yet ſpend many uſeful and important hours in this inſipid and ignominious work, which, in their lucid intervals, they confeſs, would have been employed to

to purpoſes more laudable, if they had been devoted to the honour of their God, the ſervice of their country, or the improvement of their ſouls! How many, thus, miſerably play the fool with themſelves, ſacrifice each ſolid joy, and for the incomprehenſible pleaſure of being often drunk, that is, of being often beaſts, forfeit the favour of their God, and riſk their happineſs in another world!

5thly. Drunkenneſs deſtroys the ſoul. The ſoul of man is of the greateſt price, and its happineſs of the greateſt moment.* The clear uſe of reaſon is a diſtinguiſhing benefit, and tranquillity of mind is the ſweeteſt cordial. Celeſtial perfection is ſolid greatneſs, and immortal felicity the higheſt

* Know'ſt thou th' importance of a ſoul immortal?
Behold this midnight glory; worlds on worlds;
Amazing pomp! redouble this amaze;
Ten thouſand add, and twice ten thouſand more;
Then weigh the whole: one ſoul outweighs them all,
And calls th' aſtoniſhing magnificence
Of unintelligent creation poor—

YOUNG.

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higheſt proſpect. To dwell with God is the trueſt honour, and to enjoy him the trueſt happineſs. This ſecured, the ſoul will ſhine in brightneſs, when the ſun ſhall have loſt his beams; feaſt upon joys, when miſery is extinguiſhed; and flouriſh in unfading life, when death ſhall be buried in its everlaſting tomb.

The loſs of the ſoul is the greateſt wretchedneſs; eternity only can tell us how great. To be for ever baniſhed from the fountain and father of lights; to lye under the everlaſting eclipſe of the ſun of righteouſneſs; to ſuffer the unceaſing pangs of upbraiding guilt; and to groan out a weary eternity under the gnawings of the worm that dieth not, and the burnings of the fire that cannot be quenched: theſe, alas! are miſeries, which far ſurpaſs the extent of language, and beggar all deſcription; theſe are miſeries, which far ſurpaſs the extent of thought, and beggar all conception. Heap all the miſeries of life upon a man, hunger and thirſt, cold and

and nakedneſs, famine and peſtilence, peril and ſword, diſtreſs of body, and anguiſh of mind, loſs of fortune, and loſs of friends, the fear of death, and the dread of hell; yet all this accumulation of woes is but a faint image of the wretchedneſs beyond the grave. ****

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From a practice, therefore, which ends in ſuch unſpeakable calamities, we ſhould fly with more rapidity, than from the aſſaults of death, or the tortures of an inquiſition.

To apply this to the preſent ſubject; drunkenneſs, here, clouds the underſtanding, weakens the judgment, petrifies the heart, clips the wings of the ſoul, and makes it creep inglorious through the ſinks of debauchery. Hereafter, it removes it from its native ſource, intercepts the rays of the divine favour, excludes it from the manſions of the bleſſed, and ſinks it down to the pit of deſtruction.

Here experience fails, and may it fail for ever! But it is madneſs, madneſs in

SERM. XVI. the extreme, to expoſe our ſouls to ſuch perils by a practice, which both reaſon and ſcripture predeſtinate to ruin. Bleſſed God! can ſo much folly dwell in the breaſts of thoſe, on whom thou haſt impreſſed thine own image, as to induce them, for the groſs and tranſient pleaſures of intemperance, to forego an endleſs felicity, and deliver up their ſouls to wretchedneſs for ever?

The concluſion: my brethren, fly from drunkenneſs. Drunkenneſs is a vice; therefore fly from it. It is an inſinuating vice; therefore fly from it. It is a dangerous vice; therefore fly from it. Cheriſh in your boſoms, cultivate in your lives the ſpirit of temperance. Temperance is the guardian of reaſon, the bulwark of religion, the ſiſter of prudence, the handmaid of devotion, the ſweetener of life, the comfort of death, the pleaſure of earth, and the road to heaven. Have you any regard for your health? Be temperate. Have you any regard for your

ſubſtance

ſubſtance? Be temperate. Have you any regard for your character? Be temperate. Have you any regard for your time? Be temperate. Have you any regard for your ſoul? Be temperate. Have you any regard for eternity? Be temperate. So ſhall time carry you forward on its pureſt current, till it land you on the continent of a purer eternity—As the ſwelling river rolls its limpid ſtream into the boſom of the unfathomable deep. Amen!

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SERMON XVII.

Againſt PRIDE.

PROVERBS viii: 13.

Pride I hate.

IF ever any man upon earth had a title to be proud, it was Solomon. The extent of his knowledge, the greatneſs of his wealth, the elevation of his rank, the magnificence of his court, the ſtrength of his conſtitution, and the variety of his

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enjoyments, might eſtabliſh, one would imagine, a notable foundation for pride. And, yet, behold the conſequence! In ſpite of all the glory which ſhone around him, he was ſo far from meanly nouriſhing pride, that he greatly deſpiſed it.

Solomon's greatneſs was ſolid and ſterling; he did not need, therefore, through the channel of pride, to ſolicit a greatneſs ſuperficial and flimſy. His grandeur was unequalled; but his underſtanding was ſuperior to his grandeur. He was not proud, becauſe he was not a fool; he was not proud, becauſe he was a wiſe man. Pride muſt ever be an object of contempt to wiſdom. The higher any man's judgment reaches, the lower and more deſpicable will pride appear to him.

Of all the vices, that infect the human mind, there is none more abſurd or ridiculous than pride. The covetous man amaſſes an eſtate, though he cannot enjoy it. The epicure enjoys the gratifications of appetite, ſuch as they are. And the murderer

murderer gratifies the revenge to which he is prone. But the proud man, like the common ſwearer, and like him only, ſerves the Devil for nothing. He would have reſpect, but he cannot obtain it; becauſe he deſpiſes thoſe from whom he expects it. To deſpiſe others is the moſt aukward way of gaining reſpect to ourſelves. To deſpiſe is the readieſt way to be deſpiſed. SERM. XVII.

When you compare the pride and the poverty of men together; two qualities, which ſhould never meet, and yet moſt unfortunately meet very often; when you conſider how little moſt men are, and yet how great ſome men think themſelves; does not the odiouſneſs of pride ſtrike your minds in the moſt forcible manner, and appear to you in the ſame light in which it appeared to Solomon? Moſt certainly it will, if you have but the tenth part of his wiſdom. When you behold a creature like man, a fleeting meteor, a thing of nought, who brought nothing into the

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world, is little better than nothing while he is in it, and can carry nothing out of it, a compound of wants, weakneſs, and diſeaſe; when you behold a creature, ſo feeble and imperfect as this, look big and haughty, plume himſelf on his beauty, and exult in his greatneſs; does not a ſecret indignation riſe in your breaſts, and do not your own feelings that moment juſtify Solomon's antipathy againſt it, when he ſays in the text, "Pride I hate?"

The words of themſelves form a clear propoſition, which I will not darken by an obſcure explication.

To render the diſcourſe as uſeful as poſſible, I will

1ſt. Offer a few thoughts on the nature of pride.

2dly. Point out ſome of thoſe things which render it hateful.

And 3dly. Conclude with an application.

1ſt. I am to offer a few thoughts on the nature of pride.

Man

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Man is a compound of matter and of ſpirit, which renders him a ſubject of both worlds. He is indued, of conſequence, with reaſon and paſſions: with paſſions to animate, with reaſon to govern. By the one he is related to God; by the other he is related to the brutes. Now, to regulate our paſſions, and keep them within the bounds of their reſpective province, is a mark of a prudent and judicious man. To allow them to lanch out, beyond the limits of their proper ſphere, is a proof of a ſilly and diſtempered mind.

The indulgence of any paſſion, which reaſon, juſtly informed, authorizes, is commendable and fit: the indulgence of any paſſion, which reaſon condemns, is highly to be blamed. To follow the impulſe of our paſſions, through the paths of innocence, is natural and religious: to curb their impertinent ſallies, when they grow impetuous, is laudable and juſt.

To extirpate any paſſion, were that poſſible, would be criminal; perhaps as criminal

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criminal as to indulge it without bounds; becauſe this would be to annihilate a part of the divine works, and a part of our own conſtitution; ſince our paſſions, as well as our reaſon, are planted in us by the hand of God, and eſſential to our very being. But, as I ſaid, to allay their ferment, to reſtrain their licentiouſneſs, and to uſe them as our ſervants rather than our maſters, is wiſe and prudent—diſcovers the ſtrength of our reaſon, the juſtneſs of our ſentiments, and the perfection of our faith.

What is the inference which naturally reſults from theſe general remarks? Why this: If pride is a paſſion of human nature, planted there by the hand of God, it ought not to be extirpated; but to be kept alive, cultivated, and exerted upon every proper occaſion. But pride is not a paſſion eſſential to human nature, nor planted there by the hand of God; therefore it ought to be extirpated, and to be indulged upon no occaſion.

How

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How do you prove that pride is not natural to man? I prove it thus—becauſe it is impoſſible, if that were the caſe, that Solomon ſhould ever have publiſhed his antipathy againſt it. Solomon was too wiſe a man to hate any eſſential property of human nature, to deſpiſe any of the works of God, or vilify any of thoſe gifts which deſcend from the munificent creator of all things. It will therefore follow, that pride, wherever it exiſts, is a propenſity, not genuine but ſpurious, not natural but contracted, not original but ſuperinduced.

If we attentively examine the nature of the paſſions, we ſhall find, that pride is nothing elſe but the exorbitance and wilful corruption of a natural and noble principle. The natural principle, which originally exiſts in all men, is this—a juſt and becoming ſenſe of our real dignity, as intelligent and immortal beings, and a deſire of reſpect correſponding to that eſſential dignity.

But

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But pride, which I call the exorbitance or corruption of this original principle, is not a juſt ſenſe of our dignity as men; elſe it could not be the object of a wiſe man's hatred: but a falſe, conceited, and overweening opinion of our comparative and ſuperior dignity, as men of a certain degree of eminence. Not a deſire of reſpect, proportioned to our real excellence—there is no harm in that; no—but a deſire of reſpect, proportioned to thoſe wild conceits of our ſuperior excellence, which flow from a romantic and diſtempered fancy. The firſt of theſe principles is of celeſtial parentage; the laſt, of infernal extraction. A juſt ſenſe of our own worth, as the intelligent offſpring of heaven, which inſpires a becoming elevation of ſoul, a proper dignity of ſentiment, and an unſpotted purity of manners, is a glorious part of our conſtitution, ought to be for ever cheriſhed, and kept, like gold, with the greateſt care.

This generous principle, under the influence

influence of religion, keeps a man from committing a baſe or mean, a little or a paltry action; keeps a woman from proſtituting either her virtue or her charcter; and prevents in both thoſe undue familiarities which breed contempt, thoſe ſervile compliances which debauch our hearts, thoſe unworthy ſentiments which diſgrace our reaſon, thoſe mean condeſcenſions which degenerate into vice, and thoſe acts of depravity which lead to deſtruction. SERM. XVII.

But when this principle arrives at the falſe ſublime, conſiſts in an overweening conceit of our own importance, in ill-founded ideas of our ſuperlative worth, and in the deſtitution of true humility, then it becomes the object of ſcorn and contempt, and conſtitutes that vice which is termed pride. This is that pride which the wiſe man hates; this is that pride which I now combat; this is that pride which you ſhould ſhun.

Pride and vanity, my brethren, are often confounded by ſuperficial thinkers. With

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With ſuch, a proud man and a vain man generally paſs for one and the ſame thing. But the judicious obſerver will eaſily diſcover a very wide difference; yea ſo wide, that it is next to impoſſible they can ever inhabit the ſame breaſt, at leaſt not in a very high degree—as they are compoſed of different ingredients, and evidently tend to different ends.

Pride, as I have ſhewn, conſiſts in the vaſt eſteem which men have for themſelves, and in an unreaſonable deſire of reſpect proportioned to the height of that falſe opinion. Vanity conſiſts, not in the vaſt eſteem which men have for themſelves, but in the vaſt eſteem which they wiſh the world may have for them; and this, not proportioned to their real, but to their ſhewy and ſuperficial qualities.

A proud man wiſhes to be reſpected, in proportion to thoſe high and excellent qualities, of which he fooliſhly thinks he is poſſeſſed; a vain man wiſhes to be reſpected for high and excellent qualities,

of

of which he knows he is not poſſeſſed. A proud man wiſhes, that all men would think as highly of him as he does of himſelf. A vain man wiſhes, that all men would think better of him than he does of himſelf. Pride leads to a contemptuous regard of all around; vanity, like a humble ſuppliant, begs admiration from all it meets. When pride, therefore, cries, "be reſerved;" vanity ſays, "be affable." When pride cries, "be lofty;" vanity ſays, "be courteous." When pride cries, "be inſolent and overbearing;" vanity ſays, "be gentle and complying." Thus, while the proud and haughty man, diſdainful of the world, retires into his imagination, the livelieſt of all his faculties, there to contemplate thoſe ſhining perfections, which, alas! are only viſible to himſelf; the youthful fair one, covetous of praiſe, diſplays her charms to the view of the world, and courts, with a bewitching ſmile, the eyes of mankind.

A ſlender attention to hiſtory will abundantly

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dantly convince us of this truth. There is no nation in the world, perhaps, that has ſo much vanity as the French, nor any, perhaps, that has ſo little pride. That the inhabitants of that country are vain, is evident from the gaiety of their dreſs, the ſplendor of their equipage, and the quick changes of their faſhions. That they are not proud, is evident from the affability of their addreſs, the courtlineſs of their manners, and the obligingneſs of their temper.

There is no nation, again, that perhaps has ſo much pride as the Spaniards, nor any perhaps that has ſo little vanity. That the inhabitants of that country are proud, is evident from the loftineſs of their looks, the ſtatelineſs of their behaviour, and their contempt of all the world. That they are not vain, is evident from the ſimplicity of their dreſs, the plainneſs of their equipage, and the permanency of their faſhions—which are much the ſame at this day as they were a hundred years ago; whereas

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whereas the French, like the moon, change every month.

2dly. I come to point out ſome of thoſe things, which render pride an object of hatred.

1ſt. It is the foundation of all miſery. The ultimate object of man is happineſs. Happineſs, therefore, is his native, his proper element. Miſery, of conſequence, muſt, of all things, be moſt ungrateful to him; and whatever is the cauſe of it, moſt diſguſtful.

Now, if pride be the ſource of all calamity, it muſt be hateful; and that it is the ſource of all our calamities, reaſon and ſcripture jointly teſtify. What was it that expelled celeſtial inhabitants from the court of heaven, and plunged them into the doleful ſhades of darkneſs and deſpair? Pride. What was it that baniſhed our firſt parents from the ſweet regions of paradiſe, and cauſed them with weary ſteps to travel to the tomb? Pride. What is the cauſe of all thoſe wars, thoſe tumults,

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and commotions, which now diſturb the peace of mankind? Pride. Baſeſt, blackeſt paſſion! Thou art the womb of all our miſeries, and the grave of all our joys. Happineſs fled at thy approach, as does the chearful light when the night comes on; and calamities, like a dreadful deluge, broke in, and overwhelmed the world. But for thee, diſcord had never entered into celeſtial boſoms, nor ſorrow reached the heart of man. But for thee, Angels would have flouriſhed in heaven, men have enjoyed felicity on earth, and harmony have prevailed among the works of God. But ſin and death, alas, O pride! are thy offspring; pain and wretchedneſs, all thy reward.

Who then, my friends, that thus conſiders pride as the direful ſpring of all our miſeries, can heſitate a moment to adopt the wiſe man's ſentiment, and ſay, "Pride "I hate?"

2dly. This vice is baſe in itſelf. Man, endued, as he is, with a rational nature, ought,

ought, in conformity to his exalted cha- SERM. XVII.
racter, to poſſeſs diſpoſitions, rational, generous, ſublime. As a deſcendant of heaven, he ought to form ſentiments ſuitable to the dignity of his celeſtial extraction. Hence it is, that every diſpoſition or ſentiment, which is regular, comely, conſiſtent, will ever be reſpectable in the eſtimation of an intelligent and candid ſpectator; whereas every diſpoſition or ſentiment, which is crooked, prepoſterous, deformed, will ever be deteſtable in the eyes of that man, whoſe ſtandard of judgment is truth. Now, If pride is, in its very nature, baſe, ugly, and odious, it cannot but be the juſt object of contempt and hatred.

That you may perceive the intrinſic turpitude of this vice, be pleaſed to attend to the following particulars. Pride is the very image of Lucifer; the moſt ſtriking picture of the moſt ſhocking original. Pride is a vice, in the contempt of which heaven and earth are perfectly unanimous,

SERM. XVII. as it is equally an abomination to God and man. The chaſte man deteſts fornication; the temperate man abhors drunkenneſs; but pride is hated by all.

Pride diſcovers an exceſſive meanneſs and littleneſs of ſoul, a woful ignorance and ſhallowneſs of brain, a total languor and inſenſibility of conſcience. The proud man is a fool; and it is no wonder, for he is a ſtranger to himſelf. Pride firſt blinds the eyes of his underſtanding, then leads him where it liſts, that is, in the ſtraight road to the Devil. ******

A high mind always indicates a low underſtanding—like the mountain-top, at once lofty and barren. For every man of common prudence, on the ſlighteſt examination of himſelf, and on a comparative ſurvey of his perfections and his faults, muſt be convinced, that pride was never made for man.

Conſider, I beſeech you, thoſe black and ugly qualities, which are not only the cauſe, but the inſeparable companions of pride;

pride; and then, yourſelves being judges, approve of pride, if you can. The ſource and concomitants of pride are ignorance, ill-nature, and ingratitude. In a proud man all theſe odious or deſpicable qualities muſt neceſſarily unite. For it is impoſſible, in the nature of things, that pride can either ſpring from, or conſiſt with, good-nature, a good underſtanding, or a grateful heart. Look, therefore, all the world over, and you will never find a proud man, but he is ill-natured: good-nature is always kind, gentle, and obliging. Look all the world over, and you will never find a proud man, but he is ignorant, eſpecially of himſelf. Look all the world over, and you will never find a proud man, but he is ungrateful; ungrateful even to his beſt benefactors. Every favour he receives, puts him in mind of his own neceſſity, and his benefactor's ſuperiority, both which ideas torment his heart. Every favour he receives, puts him in mind of a favour he owes; SERM. XVII.

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and this but ill agreeing with his temper, grates upon his ſoul; ſo that he conſiders gratitude as an infernal enchantment, which ſerves to conjure up, from the manſions of the dead, the vengeful ghoſts of departed benefits, to haunt and haraſs him, to diſturb him in the ſilent moments of repoſe, and torment him in the place of his moſt ſecret retirement.

Now, If ignorance, ill-nature, and ingratitude, do not demonſtrate the uglineſs of a vice in which they all exiſt, it will be difficult to ſay what can. Who, then, that conſiders pride in all its baſeneſs and deformity, would wiſh to alter the wiſe man's ſentiment, "pride I hate"?

I ſhould now proceed to ſome other conſiderations by which the hatefulneſs of pride may be ſtill farther manifeſted; but it is neceſſary at preſent, that I relax your attention.

SERMON

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Againſt PRIDE.

PROVERBS viii, 13.

Pride I hate.

IN diſcourſing from this text, upon a former occaſion, I propoſed to make ſome general remarks upon the nature of pride; to conſider ſome of thoſe things, which render it the object of hatred; and to conclude with an application. I have made

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ſome remarks upon pride, and pointed out two of thoſe things which render it, at once, contemptible and odious, namely, that it is the fountain of miſery, and that it is baſe in itſelf.

3dly. Pride is deſtructive to ſociety. Man, by the very law of his birth, is evidently a member of ſociety. Society, of conſequence, has an indiſputable claim upon his friendſhip and ſervices. So far, therefore, as any man acts from ſocial principles, his character muſt be virtuous and eſtimable. So far as any man deviates from this ſtandard, and acts from ſelfiſh and ſordid principles, his character muſt be, what he himſelf is, vicious and deteſtable. Now, If pride makes men unfriendly to ſociety, and leads them to actions ſubverſive of its welfare, then is it juſtly an object of deteſtation.

Every vice, in its native tendency, is more or leſs deſtructive to the good of mankind; but to this good pride is peculiarly deſtructive. Moſt of the other vices

leave

leave behind them ſome perceptible traces of generous ſentiment, and ſocial feeling; but pride confines a man wholly within himſelf, ſhuts up his bowels of compaſſion, ſteels his heart againſt the impreſſions of humanity, annihilates the endearments of friendſhip, and cuts off thoſe ſtreams of munificence, which ſhould circulate through the world, and convey ſweets of peace and chearfulneſs. SERM. XVIII.

Pride, like Gideon's fleece, repleniſhed itſelf with the dews of heaven, leaves all around it dry and empty. The proud man is the only thing in nature, from which the world derives no real advantage. Every part of the univerſe contributes its ſhare, every element offers its kindly aid to ſupport the beauty, elegance, and utility of the whole; but the proud man, full of himſelf, and diſdainful of others, wraps himſelf up, like the grovelling hedge-hog, in his own ſoft down, and ſhoots out his prickles to all around.

The proud man lives as if he had been

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been made ſolely for himſelf, and ſeems to wiſh that all men had been made ſolely for him. His cares are all confined within the narrow limits of his own private intereſt, and he remains inſenſible to the misfortunes of his fellow creatures. It muſt, therefore, be owing to the virtue and good-nature of others, of which he has not a particle, that a creature, of this unloving and unlovely temper, is not baniſhed from the aſſemblies of men, as a reproach to humanity, a blemiſh to his ſpecies, an excreſcence in ſociety, and a blot in the creation—and chaſed away, like other fierce and ſavage animals, to the wild and inhoſpitable deſert, there to aſſociate with beaſts of prey, to be a companion to the lion and the leopard, and to take up his habitation with the dragons of the wilderneſs.

Conſider the effects of pride, and you will find, that, from this corrupt and putrid fountain, iſſue forth many of thoſe noiſome ſtreams, which infect and poiſon mankind.

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mankind. Whence come wars and fightings, murders and rebellions, envyings and ſtrife, duellings and death? whence? but from pride, that firſt and worſt of evils, which came from the Devil, and muſt go to him. Thus a man, under the power of this diabolical paſſion, will ſacrifice the honour of his God, the love of his Saviour, the good of his country, and even imbrue his hands in the blood of his friend, to ſecure a point of imaginary honour. Good God! What is man, when abandoned by his reaſon! What is man, when he becomes the ſport of pride! He dwells on the brink of deſtruction, and his habitation is in the chambers of death.

Reflect on the hiſtory of Haman; a man, whoſe prudence was by no means a match for his pride. Puft up with the honours of a court, he forgot that he was a man; and deified by the adorations of ſervile flatterers, he could not brook the leaſt apparent affront. Hence Mordecai muſt

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muſt fall a victim to his pride, ſuffer for the want of an abject complaiſance, and die becauſe he omitted to honour a man, whoſe greateſt misfortune was, that he had been too much honoured already. A gallows, of conſequence, was prepared for him, no leſs than ſixty cubits high. But the wiſdom of God thought it juſt, that Haman ſhould enjoy the firſt fruits of his own labour, eſpecially as the height of the gallows was ſo exactly proportioned to the height of his pride; and thereupon he was hanged himſelf, verifying the old remark that pride generally goes before deſtruction. And I verily believe, that it would be no great loſs to the world, if every man, who has the ſame diſpoſitions ſhould likewiſe come to the ſame end.

From Haman turn your eyes to the proud Phariſee in the temple, addreſſing God. Inſtead of humbling himſelf before the King of Kings, and calling out with the voice of ſupplication, "Lord be merci-

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" ful to me a ſinner;"* he triumphs over the poor publican, inſults the ſacred form of religion, and with a boaſtful tone ſpeaks thus to God—" God, I thank thee, that I am not like other men"†. God forbid, that other men ſhould be like thee. Alas! ſuch boaſting does not befit the ſituation of man. Such arrogance does not conſiſt with thoſe infirmities, which are interwoven with humanity. Who, then, that conſiders pride in its deteſtable nature, and baleful conſequences, can withhold his aſſent from the doctrine of the text —" Pride I hate?"

4thly. Pride is inconſiſtent with religion. Religion, without all doubt, is man's chief concern. It includes every important bleſſing, whether relative to time or to eternity. Now, a ſupreme attachment to our ſupreme intereſt, is the genuine teſt of wiſdom, and the proper object of reſpect. Inattention to our real happineſs

* Luke xviii, 13. † Luke xviii, 11.

SERM. XVIII. happineſs is the ſummit of folly, and the proper object of contempt. If pride, therefore, is repugnant to religion, our ſupreme intereſt, as undoubtedly it is, then is it deſerving of the utmoſt hatred.

Religion, like every other ſcience, is a thing to be learned. The knowledge of it is not born with us, nor muſt our riper years truſt to inſpiration. Our cradles will not teach us the road to heaven; nor will grey hairs plant in our heads the knowledge of ſalvation; no: religion, wherever it is, muſt be the effect of much culture, ſedulous application, and a ſoul open to conviction.

Now, humility is the beſt property of a ſcholar; pride, the greateſt obſtacle to knowledge. The mind, when docile and tractable, imbibes inſtruction; when high and unſubdued, ſhuts up all the paſſages to truth. Whenever a man, therefore, in his own conceit, becomes wiſer than his teacher, from that moment you may mark him down for a fool; and as ſoon as he

ſets

ſets up, on ſuch terms, for his own conductor, you may be certain, that he will go aſtray—" for if the light that is in " him be darkneſs, how great muſt his " darkneſs be!* Pride will firſt lead him into a thouſand miſtakes, and then it will lock up his ſoul under their dominion. For a proud man has not fortitude to bear the light of conviction, or the force of mortifying truth. SERM. XVIII.

Humility, then, is the ſureſt mark of a Chriſtian, who is here, like a ſcholar, in a ſchool of diſcipline for immortality. Pride is the ſureſt mark of an infidel, who thinks he has too much wiſdom to be of any religion. For what is the ſource of infidelity, but pride? What is the eſſence of religion, but humility? A proud man, therefore, whatever his profeſſion may be, has no religion. A proud man, though he may have been baptized, is not a Chriſtian. A proud Chriſtian, and a deviliſh

* Matthew v, 23.

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deviliſh Chriſtian, are one and the ſame character in different words. And we may, with as much propriety, ſay, that a man is an humble diſciple of Satan, as a proud diſciple of Chriſt—of Chriſt, who taught humility by his precepts, exemplified it in his life, and left us a pattern that we ſhould follow his ſteps.

Every proud man is his own Idol; but no Chriſtian can make an Idol of himſelf. To be pious, yet proud; forgiving, yet proud; charitable, yet proud; humble, yet proud; if it is not a contradiction in reality, has at leaſt, moſt certainly, the appearance of one. The Eaſt, therefore, is not more diſtant from the Weſt, than the ſpirit of pride is from the ſpirit of religion. Darkneſs is not more oppoſite to light, than the ſpirit of pride is to the ſpirit of religion.

Pride, too, is attended with this ſingular circumſtance, that, however infamous it is in itſelf, it may yet conſiſt with every other thing. Thus, if a young woman, dazzled

dazzled with the luſtre of her own charms, grows proud of her beauty; her comelineſs, indeed, may be equal to her pride, though, perhaps, ſhe would be as much admired by others, if ſhe were leſs admired by herſelf. Thus, if a philoſopher, intoxicated with ridiculous notions of his ſuperior underſtanding, grows proud of his attainments; his knowledge, I own, is not leſſened by his pride, though perhaps it would be as much reſpected, if joined with humility. Thus, too, if a king, enamoured with the ſplendors of a throne, is proud of his diſtinguiſhed honour; the height of his head, I confeſs, does not endanger the ſafety of his crown, though, perhaps, he would be as much regarded by the world, if he were more gentle and acceſſible. SERM. XVIII.

But the religious man, as ſoon as he is proud either of his religion or of himſelf, that moment ceaſes to be religious. For of religion the foundation is humility; and when the foundation is deſtroy-

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ed, the ſuperſtructure muſt fall. Pride is a gnawing worm, which crops the ſweeteſt flowers of virtue; pride is a mortal poiſon, which conſumes the vitals of religion. Hence it is manifeſt, that, if you will be proud, you muſt renounce your religion; if you will be religious, you muſt renounce your pride. For religion is built on humility; pride, on conceit: and to reconcile them is impoſſible. "There is no communication "betwixt light and darkneſs, no fellow- "ſhip betwixt Chriſt and Belial, no "agreement betwixt God and Idols."* Who, then, that conſiders pride as the great bane of religion, man's chief and ultimate concern, would not wiſh to transfuſe into his breaſt the ſentiment in the text, and ay, with undiſſembled indignation, "Pride 'I hate?"

Thus have I endeavoured to point out ſome of thoſe things, which render pride the object of hatred.

3dly

* 2 Corinthians vi, 14, 15, 16.

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3dly. I come now to conclude this diſcourſe with an application. Nothing, my brethren, have we, of which we can with reaſon be proud; and to be proud without reaſon is the conſummation of weakneſs and folly. "Naked came I into "the world, and naked ſhall I return," is the motto of every man's birth, the hiſtory of his life, and his epitaph when dead. What room is there for pride in ſuch a ſituation?

Take a view of all the goods of nature, of fortune, and of thoſe of our own acquiring; and behold in each the vanity of pride.

Are you proud of beauty? Alas! that is weak indeed. Beauty is but a toy, and that a fading one. The faireſt flower ſoon decays, and the ſweeteſt bloom ſoon withers, in the cold bed of death* Be-

 ſides,

* The bloom of beauty will not ever ſtay,
And flow'rs, tho' left ungather'd, will decay:
The flow'rs anew returning ſeaſons bring;
But faded beauty has no ſecond ſpring.

PHILIPS.

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ſides, beauty, if unadorned with virtue, will be more apt to blaſt than bleſs you.

Are you proud of birth?* Alas! if your anceſtors were good, the more will be expected from you; if they were bad, they but diſgrace you. Beſides, the man that is in honour, abideth not; and all diſtinctions die in the houſe of death. Will your duſt, think ye, be acquainted with heraldry? Or, will your dead bones preſerve their ſuperiority in the grave? No: there the king and the ſubject are upon a level; there the ſervant is free from his maſter.

Are you proud of knowledge? Alas! little in our preſent ſtate can we know, and

* Fondly our high deſcent we boaſt;
If, whence at firſt our breath we drew,
The common ſprings of life we view,
The airy notion ſoon is loſt.

Th' Almighty made us equal all;
But he, that ſlaviſhly complies
To do the drugery of vice,
Diſowns his high original.

BOETHIUS.

and little of that little do we know. In many things, we have no knowledge; in all things, our knowledge is imperfect. Beſides, how ſlippery is its hold! How uncertain its tenure! A fright or a fever may turn a wiſe man to an idiot, and make the idol of reſpect the object of compaſſion. SERM. XVIII.

Are you proud of power?* Alas! that may gain you flatterers, but never friends: that may make you high in this world; but if abuſed, as is often the caſe, may make you as low in the next. Beſides, what mighty feats can power atchieve? Can it ward off the tyrant's blow, or ſtop the rapid wheel of time? Can it repel the attack of death, or reſcue its owner from

* Can place or leſſen us, or aggrandize?
Pygmies are pygmies ſtill, though perch'd on Alps;
And pyramids are pyramids in vales.
Each man makes his own ſtature, builds himſelf.
Virtue alone out-builds the pyramids;
Her monuments ſhall laſt, when Egypt's fall.

YOUNG.

SERM. XVIII. the jaws of the grave? No. What then is power? A ſhadow.

Are you proud of riches? Alas! riches, for the moſt part, breed more wants than they ſatisfy; and often make to themſelves wings, and fly away. Beſides, what valuable benefits can riches beſtow? Can they recal a moment of time that is fled, or purchaſe a reprieve from the king of terrors? Can they eternize the ſweet moments of mirth and chearfulneſs, or diſpel the gloom from the brow of ſorrow? Can they repair the wrecks of a ruined body, or eaſe the ſmart of an aking conſcience? Will they ſtand your friend in the hour of death, or plead your cauſe in the day of judgment? Alas! they are no more.

Thus I could go through all the varieties of life, and, were your patience as large as our ſubject, ſhew you, in every inſtance, the folly and abſurdity of pride.

But to ſum up all in a few words: If any man will ſhew me any thing in the compaſs of nature, or attainments of art,

art, which ought not to inſpire him with humility, rather than with pride, I will give up the cauſe. If not, then every proud man, by the verdict of his own reaſon, muſt be ſelf-condemned. SERM XVIII.

Fly therefore, my friends, from pride, and clothe yourſelves with humility. Check each preſumptuous thought, which riſes in your breaſts; and learn, what is the eſſence of all philoſophy, to know yourſelves; what is the eſſence of all religion, to be humble. Amidſt your gay moments of diſſipation and mirth, ſometimes caſt an eye upon death. Reflect that death kills the lily as well as the thiſtle, and buries the roſe as well as the thorn. Reflect that the robes of the prince, and the rags of the peaſant, are both laid up together in the wardrobe of the grave.*

* Hither, as to the grand retiring room,
From earth's wide ſtage the mortal actors come,
And here partake an undiſtinguiſh'd doom;
Aſide their honours, with their robes, they throw;
The herald, and his trade, are loſt below;
The king, depos'd, forgets the noiſe he made;
And the rude peaſant crowds the royal ſhade.
CLAUDIAN.

SERM. XVIII. Reflect that all things here are mixed and mutable; nothing pure and permanent, but the friendſhip of God. To believe in him is our duty, to know him is our intereſt, to worſhip him is our honour, to truſt in him is our ſafety, to ſerve him is our liberty, to enjoy him is our happineſs.

This conduct will ſupport us through every period of our pilgrimage, comfort us at the dark and trying hour of death, make us appear with courage before the throne of God, and render us inhabitants of that country, where pride is not known, and where proud men cannot dwell, where the lowlineſs of mortality will ceaſe for ever, and humility put on her everlaſting diadem. Amen!

SERMON

SERMON XIX.

Againſt the VIOLATION of the SABBATH.

DEUTERONOMY v, 12.

Keep the Sabbath day to ſanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee.

THE violation of the Lord's day is one of thoſe vices, from which the preſent age cannot pretend to be free. Nay, it is one of thoſe vices, for which the preſent age is notoriouſly infamous. A diſcourſe, therefore, againſt this deteſtable ſpecies of

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of impiety, this ſhameful proſtitution of the beſt of days to the worſt of purpoſes, will not, I hope, be conſidered as a thing either unneceſſary or improper by thoſe, who are inſpired with reſpect for the authority of God, or cheriſh benevolent wiſhes for the happineſs of men.

In the proſecution of this ſubject I will endeavour to ſhew

1ſt. In what the duty of keeping the ſabbath day, to ſanctify it, conſiſts.

2dly. The propriety of this duty.

3dly. Our obligation to perform this duty.

4thly. The folly and danger of neglecting this duty.

And 5thly. Conclude with a ſhort reflection.

1ſt. I am to conſider the duty itſelf.

The duty of keeping the ſabbath day, to ſanctify it, conſiſts in theſe three things—Firſt, in a total ceſſation from our ordinary buſineſs: Secondly, in calm and deliberate reflections on ourſelves, and on

on our conduct: Thirdly, in attending the publick worſhip of God.

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This is the duty, the reaſonableneſs and propriety of which I proceed, 2dly, to illuſtrate. And firſt, for the propriety of a day of reſt:

Man is an active being; activity, therefore, is his proper element. Lazineſs is the ruſt of the ſoul, and benumbs all its faculties. Hence it is, that excepting a few idle drones, who hang like a dead weight on ſociety, who are good for nothing upon earth, but to eat and drink, and ſleep and dream, and therefore ought not to live, but merely becauſe they are not fit to die; excepting a few of this ſluggiſh and indolent complexion, every man has ſome buſineſs or employment, to which he devotes his whole attention, and from which he derives ſome ſolid ſatisfaction. Now, ſuch is the conſtitution of human nature, in its preſent ſtate of fickleneſs and frailty, that we cannot be long intent upon the ſame objects, however

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ever delightful; but would faint and languiſh under the conſtant repetition, even of thoſe actions and enjoyments, to which we have the ſtrongeſt attachment. The ſoul, impriſoned, as it is, in a cottage of clay, cannot endure the drudgeries of perpetual fatigue, but would ſink under the oppreſſive load, and fall a melancholy victim to unceaſing ſervitude.

The wiſdom and goodneſs of God, therefore, are conſpicuouſly viſible in allowing us one day, in the revolution of every ſeven, for the reſt of our bodies, and the refreſhment of our minds, that, by the rational improvement of theſe friendly intervals of relaxation, we may be fitted to diſcharge the offices of our reſpective vocations with more vigour and alacrity, travel through the chequered roads of life with more comfort and ſerenity, and arrive at laſt, through the paſſage of the grave, at the happy land of reſt and peace. What can be more proper, then, what can be more reaſonable,

able, what can be more ſuitable to our preſent circumſtances, than that this day, held ſacred from the common buſineſs of life, we ſhould devote to reſt, to relieve our weary faculties, to repair our decayed ſtrength, and fit us for our journey? SERM. XIX.

2dly. Let us conſider the propriety of devoting a part of the ſabbath to reflection. The proper ſphere of man in this world, as we have ſuggeſted, is buſineſs, not ſpeculation. To this our native deſires forcibly impel us; to this neceſſity urges us, whether we deſire it or not. Hence, as I have ſaid, almoſt every man betakes himſelf to ſome employment, for the exerciſe of his active powers, and for the relief of his neceſſities.

Now, in every employment, ſucceſs muſt be the aim of every man. But ſucceſs is actually impoſſible unleſs our minds are reconciled to our employment. Pharaoh's chariots did not move through the Red Sea with a more awkward progreſs, when their wheels were ſtruck off by raging

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raging waves, than does the conduct of our affairs, when our heart is at variance with our profeſſion. It will not do for a man to have his buſineſs in one place, and his affections in another. For though, by this conduct, his ſpiritual intereſt may flouriſh, yet his temporal intereſt muſt decay; though, by this conduct, he may perhaps be a King in another world, yet it is certain, he muſt be a beggar in this.

The wiſdom and goodneſs of God, therefore, are conſpicuous in not requiring from us duties, which interfere with one another, but in allowing us, out of every ſeven days, ſix to labour for the good things of the life which now is, and one for the better things of the life which is to come; that, by a prudent diſcharge of the reſpective duties, which each particular day requires, we may effectually ſecure our intereſt in both worlds, and make the one a comfortable paſſage to the other.

What, therefore, can be more proper, what can be more reaſonable, what can be more

more ſuitable to our preſent circumſtances, than that on this day, conſecrated to the purpoſe of ſerious reflection, we ſhould retire from the noiſe and buſtle of the outward world, in which we have been agitated through the week, into the ſecret chambers of the inward world—there to contemplate, with underſtandings enlightened, and conſciences awake, the nobleneſs of our heavenly birth, the great deſign of our entrance on this mortal ſtage, and whither we muſt go, when the drama of life is finiſhed, and the curtain of time for ever drops? What can be more proper, than that on this day, friendly to the exerciſe of ſelf-examination, we ſhould, with heart-felt regret, lament, before God, our numberleſs deviations from the path of rectitude, and firmly reſolve, through the future periods of life, to act upon a plan more agreeable to the dignity of our nature, as men, the elevation of our character, as Chriſtians, and the ſublimity of our hopes, as heirs of immortality?

What

SERM. XIX. What, I beſeech you, can be more proper, than that on this day, this hallowed day, reflections of ſuch deep concern ſhould employ the thoughts of thoſe, who are travelling towards eternity, whoſe tenure of this life is ſo uncertain, and whoſe everlaſting all lies at ſtake?

3dly. Let us conſider the propriety of devoting a part of the ſabbath to the purpoſe of publick worſhip. God is the author of all good; therefore the object of all gratitude. God is the author of all happineſs; therefore the object of all hope. That God is to be worſhipped by all beings endowed with intelligence, is a law of nature as old as the exiſtence of intelligent beings. For if to expreſs gratitude to a benefactor, loyalty to a ſovereign, and affection to a parent, be a law of nature—which, I think, none will be ſo hardy as to deny—then it muſt be, in the higheſt ſenſe, a law of nature to expreſs, with the utmoſt fervency, gratitude to God, who is the beſt of benefactors, loyalty to God

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God who is the beſt of ſovereigns, and affection to God who is the beſt of parents.

Attendance, therefore, on publick worſhip, as publick benefits demand publick acknowledgements, and publick tranſgreſſions require publick contrition, is a duty expreſsly founded upon nature itſelf; and though the time, when this is moſt acceptably performed, is acknowledged to be of poſitive inſtitution, yet the mind, willing to perform the duty from a ſpirit of filial devotion, will gladly embrace the moſt acceptable time, and receive the intimation of it, with all that chearfulneſs and gratitude, with which the benighted traveller beholds the approach of the morning.

What, then, can be more proper, than that we, who are the prieſts of this earth, and the repreſentatives of all other ſublunary creatures, ſhould on this day, ſacred to the purpoſes of religion and piety, ſolemnly enter into the temple of God—there to offer up to the King of the univerſe, not indeed the ſacrifice of bulls or of goats,

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(alas! theſe are but dead and inſipid offerings) but our own bodies and ſouls, a living ſacrifice to their creator? What can be more proper, than that we enter into the temple of God, there to burn, before him, the ſpiritual incenſe of ſincere devotion, and ſend up to heaven, with unceaſing ardour, the thank-offerings of praiſe? What can be more proper, than that we enter into the temple of God, there to conſecrate to him the firſt born of our ſouls, that is, virtuous affections, and the firſt fruits of our ſtrength, that is, virtuous actions? What can be more proper, than that we enter into the temple of God, there to ſlay every impure deſire upon the altar of a pure conſcience, and to renounce for ever all our ſelfiſh and criminal attachments? What can be more proper, than that we enter into the temple of God, there to vow a vow unto the Lord of our conſciences, and firmly reſolve to perform it by the daily oblation of a virtuous life? This conduct is the very

very eſſence of propriety; the reverſe is the very eſſence of abſurdity. SERM. XIX.

Moreover, we are ſocial beings; and, in this capacity, owe one another moſt important duties. Now, to promote the principle of ſocial love, which is the foundation of ſocial happineſs, in the ways of innocence and virtue, is of all true religion the ſupreme deſign. Whatever has this divine and bliſsful tendency, muſt, in the higheſt degree, be rational, proper, and praiſe-worthy. It is an evident truth, that as perpetual abſence from each other makes us rude and barbarous, ſo frequent meeting together makes us poliſhed and civil. As perpetual ſolitude nouriſhes each brutal and ſelfiſh diſpoſition, ſo mixing with company tends to promote the ſocial affections. And the buſineſs of the day immediately points to our improvement in knowledge and in virtue. What then can be more proper, than that, with joy and thankſgiving, we ſhould embrace this precious opportunity

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of cultivating the principle of ſocial love, improving our minds in the knowledge of our duty, and ſtrengthening our inclinations to the practice of virtue?

The ignorant ſhould go to church, that they may be wiſe: the wiſe ſhould go to church, that they may not be ignorant; ignorant of that which concerns them moſt, I mean, of religion, and the concerns of their ſouls, and thus, profeſſing themſelves to be wiſe, in the worſt of all ſenſes they become fools. The humble ſhould go to church, that they may be kept from pride; and the proud ſhould go to church that they may be rendered humble. The rich ſhould go to church, that they may be taught not to truſt in uncertain riches; and the poor ſhould go to church, that they may have the goſpel preached unto them. The buſy ſhould go to church, that they may learn, what through the hurry of buſineſs they are apt to forget, that one thing is needful, yea the moſt needful buſineſs of all;

and the idle ſhould go to church becauſe they have nothing elſe to do, that as they do nothing for their bodies, they may do ſomething for their ſouls. The bad ſhould go to church, that they may be good; and the good ſhould go to church, that they may be better. The young ſhould go to church, that they may learn to live; and the old ſhould go to church, that they may learn to die. SERM. XIX.

What remains I ſhall reſerve for another opportunity.

SERMON XX.

Against the VIOLATION OF the SABBATH.

SERMON XX.

Againſt the VIOLATION of the SABBATH.

DUTERONOMY v, 12.

Keep the ſabbath day to ſanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee.

IN treating this ſubject, I propoſed to ſhew SERM. XX.

1ſt. The nature of the duty enjoined.

2dly. The propriety of this duty.

3dly. Our obligation to perform this duty.

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4thly. The folly and danger of neglecting this duty.

5thly. To conclude with a ſhort reflection.

The two firſt of theſe points I have already conſidered. I proceed

3dly. To conſider our obligation to keep the ſabbath day, to ſanctify it. Our obligation to perform this duty ariſes from the poſitive authority, and expreſs appointment of Almighty God, whoſe law to man is this, "Keep the ſabbath day "to ſanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath "commanded thee."

Now, every law of God is obligatory upon every man, to whom the knowledge of that law is communicated, as he has an undoubted right by virtue of his ſupremacy, as univerſal governor, to preſcribe laws to his moral ſubjects, and to require from them ſubmiſſion and obedience. Obſerve the conſequence. "Keep "the ſabbath day to ſanctify it," is a law of God, the knowledge of which has been

been communicated to us; and therefore we are under an indiſpenſable obligation to obſerve it with the moſt ſcrupulous punctuality. Nor can I conceive, how it is poſſible for any man to evade the force of this obligation, but by one of theſe two ways: either firſt, by a total rejection of ſcripture; or ſecondly, by denying that this obligation reaches to the firſt day of the week, which is the Chriſtian ſabbath. SERM. XX.

The firſt is the objection of the Infidel; the ſecond is the objection of the Jew. Thoſe who totally reject the ſcripture, as a book of ſpurious origin, it is not the buſineſs of this diſcourſe to confute; though arguments are not wanting in abundance, effectually to confute them. It is well, if men of this way of thinking can, upon the principles of candour and careful enquiry, ſo far ſatisfy their minds of the ſpurious origin of ſcripture, as to ſecure the approbation of their own judgment, while they live, and the approbation of God, their great judge, when they die; but

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but if they cannot, it is great pity, that they ſhould wilfully offend the two beſt friends in the world, God, and their own conſcience, for the ſake of promoting ſome paltry intereſt, or of gratifying ſome ridiculous humour.

All that I ſhall ſay upon the preſent point, is this: unleſs we acknowledge the authority of God in the appointment of the ſabbath, it will be difficult to explain upon what principle time has been divided into weeks. The revolution of the earth round the ſun, and the regular return of the ſeaſons, plainly point out the diviſion of time into years; the revolution of the moon round the earth ſuggeſts the diviſion of time into months; and the alternate ſucceſſion of light and darkneſs intimates the diviſion of time into day and night: but there is no circumſtance in the natural world, nor indeed in any thing that I know, to ſupport the diviſion of time into weeks, except the poſitive appointment of God. This, in my opinion, is no incon-

inconſiderable proof of the authenticity of ſcripture, becauſe it gives us a ſatisfactory account of the origin of a cuſtom, which has obtained in every country, and in every period, from the beginning of the world to this day; of which cuſtom, if we lay aſide the authority of God, we cannot give any account, which merits the attention, much leſs the approbation, of a rational mind. SERM. XX.

For the ſatisfaction of thoſe who acknowledge, in general, the obligation of keeping the ſabbath, but deny that it reaches to the firſt day of the week, it may not be improper to make the following obſervations. God, when he had finiſhed the creation of the world, eſtabliſhed this as a fundamental law, that one day, in the courſe of every ſeven, ſhould be conſecrated to the memory of ſo great a work. This law is binding upon all men, as rational beings, to whom the hiſtory of the creation is tranſmitted, without any regard to their being either Jews or Chriſtians, becauſe

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because it was promulgated to the human race, long before the inſtitution of either religion.

The Jews obſerved the laſt day of the week as their ſabbath. For what reaſon? In memory of their redemption from Egyptian bondage. By what authority? By the expreſs command of God, who now ſtands to them in a new relation.

The Chriſtians, again, who were never required to obey that command, who were never ſubjects of the Jewiſh government, who were never bound by Jewiſh laws, and who have no concern in the Jewiſh deliverance from Egyptian thraldom, obſerve the firſt day of the week as their ſabbath. For what reaſon? In memory of their deliverance from more than Egyptian darkneſs and captivity, by the reſurrection of Jeſus from the dead. By what authority? Not, indeed, by the expreſs appointment of God; that would have been improper: for to what purpoſe make one law, to annul another law, which was never

never obligatory? By what then? By the example of the Apoſtles, who were under the immediate guidance and direction of God, who were the lights of the world and the ſalt of the earth, and therefore muſt be a perfect pattern to Chriſtians in all ſucceeding ages of the church, till ſuch time as God ſhall ſignify his will to the contrary. SERM. XX.

I come, in the fourth place, to conſider the folly and danger of neglecting this duty of keeping the ſabbath.

1ſt. Its folly is evident from the light of nature.

2dly. Its danger is manifeſt from the ſpirit of the divine government.

1ſt. Its folly is evident from the light of nature. If there is a propriety in obſerving the ſabbath, as I have endeavoured fully to evince; if there is a propriety in devoting it to reſt, from the hurry and fatigue of our ordinary buſineſs; if there is a propriety in devoting it to the purpoſe of ſerious reflection; if there is a propriety in

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in devoting it to the publick worſhip of God: if there is a propriety in all theſe, as I think I have proved; then it is manifeſt, there muſt be a palpable impropriety in a contrary conduct.

The man who will not devote ſome ſet portions of his time to reſt, let him ſtill drudge on, till one reſt for all concludes his labours, and death convinces him, that he is a fool, when it is too late for him to be wiſe. The man who will not devote ſome fixed periods of his life to the purpoſe of ſerious reflection, let him ſtill trifle on, till thoughtleſſneſs reduces him to a condition ſo low and abject, as will render him totally incapable of reflection; and make him at laſt a brute in reality, though in appearance a man. The man who will not dedicate ſome part of his time, publickly to expreſs his gratitude to God for all his bleſſings, is unworthy of theſe bleſſings, and not likely to proſper under them. For though the bleſſings of God, like his rain, fall upon the thankful and the

the unthankful, yet the guilty conſcience of every ungrateful man, like a ſecret canker, will corrode the heart of every enjoyment, and eat out the vitals of every comfort. SERM. XX.

Nothing can be more criminal, than a wilful deſertion of the houſe of God. Yet, alas! my brethren, when we take a view of the conduct of men, how many thouſands do we find guilty of this ſhocking and groſs impiety! How ſhamefully defective do we find thouſands, with reſpect to this ordinance of God! Perſons of rank conſider it as a thing in the higheſt degree clowniſh and unfaſhionable, to pay a ſtrict regard to ſuch formal ceremonies; though perhaps they may find it not altogether ſo unfaſhionable, in ſome other place, to give a ſtrict account for their neglect of theſe ceremonies. People of inferior conſequence, ambitious to form their behaviour upon the model of their ſuperiors, derive from them their ſpiritual, as well as temporal faſhions. Hence, what pitiful excuſes, what ſhameful evaſions, what groundleſs pretences, do numbers

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bers make, to juſtify their eſtrangement from the houſe of God! pretences, as pitiful as their authors; evaſions, for the moſt part, as void of reaſon, as their framers are void of religion; excuſes, which, I am much afraid, will not be ſuſtained at that period when the ſecrets of all hearts ſhall be laid open.

But you will ſay, why ſo uncharitable? Though we do not go to church, yet can we not be religious at home? Can we not ſay our prayers at home? Can we not read a ſermon at home? I ſay, you can. Well then, will we not be equally accepted by God, who is no reſpecter of time, place, or perſon? I ſay, you will not: I ſay more—unleſs invincible neceſſity has been the cauſe of your abſence, you will not be accepted at all. For what reaſon? For two moſt important reaſons.

1ſt. Becauſe the abſenting ourſelves unneceſſarily from the worſhip of God, is a preſumptuous defiance of his authority, whoſe expreſs command to all Chriſtians

is

is this, "forget not the aſſembling of "yourſelves together." And though ſaying prayers, and reading ſermons, (things, which, by the bye, are more frequently ſpoke of than done) are abſolutely good, when conſidered by themſelves; yet they are abſolutely bad, when conſidered as an apology for neglecting an expreſs ſtatute of heaven, or when we are employed in theſe things by our own authority, when we ought to be otherwiſe employed by the authority of God. SERM. XX.

The ſecond reaſon, why you will not be accepted, is the pernicious tendency of your conduct. You ſay, you can pray at home; you ſay, you can read a ſermon at home: and I doubt not but you can, if you chuſe. Now, obſerve what follows. The ſame right, that you have to do this, has a ſecond, and ſo has a third, and ſo has every man. Suppoſe, then, that every man were to act upon this principle; and if it is a good one, ſo much the better. What would be the conſequence? Moſt

SERM. XX. fatal. Publick worſhip is at once annihilated, and with it, I had almoſt ſaid, religion itſelf. For when once religion is ſhut up in cloſets, not daring to approach the light, whilſt audacious villainy ranges abroad, like the peſtilence that waſteth at noon day, it is eaſy to foretel, without the ſpirit of prophecy, that this muſt ſpeedily terminate in the utter deſtruction of all kind of virtue. Religion, thus confined to the heart, would rather be impriſoned than entertained. Religion, thus friendleſs and ſolitary, would pine in the ſhade, and be buried under the rubbiſh of avowed impiety. Religion, thus deprived of public countenance, would ſoon exiſt no where, but in the Bible.

But 2dly. The danger of neglecting the obſervation of the ſabbath, is evident from the ſpirit of the divine government. If it is a law of God to keep the ſabbath, as I think, among Chriſtians muſt be admitted; if the knowledge of this law has been communicated to us, as, I think, no

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Chriſtian will deny; then it muſt follow, that the dedication of this day, by any profeſſed Chriſtian, to the purpoſes of ſecular buſineſs, or idle amuſement, muſt be a manifeſt violation of an expreſs law, and conſequently muſt ſubject him to the ſevereſt puniſhment. SERM. XX.

For the illuſtration of this point, I will lay down four general principles.

1ſt. All laws have a relation to government, and are intended for the benefit and good order of ſociety.

2dly. In order to give laws and inſtitutions their proper weight and efficacy, ſanctions of rewards and puniſhments muſt be adhibited, otherwiſe the beſt-formed laws would ſoon fall into contempt.

3dly. All laws, in themſelves, good, and enacted by a law-giver authorized to preſcribe, muſt be binding upon thoſe to whom his authority reaches; conſequently the neglect or violation of them muſt merit the ſevereſt puniſhment.

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4thly. The more any law is calculated to promote the happineſs of mankind, the greater the author of that law or inſtitution is, the better it is adapted to the ſituation of the governed, and the clearer the circumſtances of its promulgation are, the more ſtill doth ſuch a law or inſtitution challenge and command reſpect; of conſequence, the contempt or violation of it muſt merit the heavieſt and moſt exemplary puniſhment.

Now, to apply theſe general principles to the point, which they are deſigned to illuſtrate—The obſervation of the ſabbath is a law, which obviouſly tends to promote the happineſs of mankind; and therefore is a good law. The obſervation of the ſabbath is a law of God, who is fully intitled to preſcribe to us, and whoſe authority extends over all his rational creatures; and therefore is an obligatory law. The obſervation of the ſabbath is a law, admirably adapted to the genius of the governed, and perfectly clear in all the circumſtances

cumſtances of its publication; and therefore is a beneficial and certain law. The obſervation of the ſabbath is a law of God, which, like all his other laws, is guarded by the ſtrongeſt and moſt forcible ſanctions, even happineſs to the obedient ſubject, and miſery to the wilful tranſgreſſor; and therefore is a powerful and commanding law. The conſequence is, that the violation or contempt of this law, in all reſpects ſo excellent, in all reſpects ſo obligatory, muſt imply an incurable obſtinacy and perverſity of ſpirit; and, conſequently, muſt ſubject the preſumptuous offender to the ſevereſt puniſhment, and the heavieſt doom. It is therefore our intereſt, as well as our duty, to honour the law, that ſo the law may honour us; and to fly from the crime, that ſo the puniſhment may be averted from us.

I will now conclude the diſcourſe with a reflection: and, as I promiſed, it ſhall be ſhort. Let us thank God, that, amidſt all the hurry and buſtle of life, he gives

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us, in every week, one day to reſt. Let us thank God, that, amidſt all the ſurrounding objects of temptation, he gives us one day in every week, more immediately to exerciſe the powers of reflection, and to confirm us in the paths of virtue. Let us thank God, that, amidſt all the danger of forgetting him, he gives us one day in every week, to call his love to our remembrance, and to ſtrengthen our inclination to obey him. And, above all, let us manifeſt our gratitude by the moſt valuable and ſubſtantial proofs; a chearful, conſtant, unreſerved obedience to this, and every other law of God, all whoſe laws are, like himſelf, holy, juſt, and good. So ſhall we enjoy pleaſure without alloy, and bear calamity without murmur; ſo ſhall we meet death without horror, and meet God without fear. Amen!

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SERMON XXI.

An Ordination Sermon.

TITUS 2, xv.

Let no man deſpiſe thee.

TO make men happy, is the deſign of goodneſs; to make men good, is the deſign of religion; to make men religious, is the deſign of preaching; and to make preaching ſucceſsful, is the deſign of a church. Utility, then, is a miniſter's SERM. XXI.

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object, and reſpect ſhould be a miniſter's aim. In him, reſpect and utility are inſeparable; in him, utility and contempt are incompatible. In this character, to be uſeful and not reſpected, is a ſuppoſition abſurd; in this character, to be uſeful and deſpiſed, is a ſuppoſition impoſſible. Where there is no reſpect to this character, there is no reverence; where there is no reverence, there is no love; and where there is no love, there is no obedience. A better advice, therefore, an apoſtle could not give, a better advice an apoſtle could not receive, than this in the text—"Let no man deſpiſe thee."

A deſire of reſpect is native to the ſoul; reſpect is one of the chief rewards of virtue. Life without reſpect, is not life at all, but only its naked ſkeleton, or rather, if you will, its walking ſhadow. It is reſpect, and reſpect alone, which gives life to exiſtence, and energy to life.

In the expreſſion, "Let no man deſpiſe thee," there is an uncommon peculiarity.

liarity. It ſeems to ſuppoſe, that ones SERM. XXI.
man's action ſhould be another man's duty; that one man ſhould be maſter of another man's ſentiments. How can I prevent another man's deſpiſing me? There is a latitude in the expreſſion, and through it is conveyed to us this idea, that though it may not be in every man's power to ward off the miſplaced ridicule of knaves or fools, yet it is certainly in every man's power, by a proper attention to his ſentiments, character, and conduct, to prevent each ſuppoſable occaſion for deſerved reproach.

Now, to point out thoſe qualifications, which ſecure a miniſter from contempt, ſhall be the buſineſs of this diſcourſe.

1ſt. A miniſter ſhould have good ſenſe.

2dly. A miniſter ſhould have good education.

3dly. A miniſter ſhould be a good preacher.

4thly.

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4thly. A miniſter ſhould be a good man.

The Chriſtian miniſtry, my brethren, is, in this age of refinement, become an old faſhioned and diſreſpected eſtabliſhment; as much regarded as men regard their ſouls, that is very little; as much deſpiſed as men deſpiſe religion, that is very much. The bright aſſemblage, however, of the four qualifications mentioned above, will render a miniſter reſpectable in ſpite of the world; but the abſence of any one of them will render him contemptible in ſpite of himſelf.

We begin with the firſt qualification, which is good ſenſe. Good ſenſe is the foundation of future knowledge, and the preſage of future reſpect. The want of it is a radical defect, and an inſuperable bar againſt real eſteem. Stupidity blocks up the avenues to ſcience, and levity evacuates inſtruction as faſt as it imbibes it. Good ſenſe is a qualification ornamental to a man, but a qualification eſſential to a miniſter,

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miniſter, becauſe his duty is the moſt momentous, and his office the moſt honourable.

By good ſenſe I do not mean a bright genius, a pregnant fancy, a tenacious memory, or a ſparkling wit. Alas! theſe ſhewy and ſuperficial qualities rather attract admiration from the ignorant, than reſpect from the wiſe. But by good ſenſe I underſtand a comprehenſiveneſs of thought, a ſolidity of judgment, and a clear conception of things, which is generally what we mean by the term prudence, or common ſenſe. This is a ſenſe not to be acquired by habit, nor picked up at univerſities, but coeval with the ſoul, and impreſſed on its original form.

Men, therefore, in the early period of life, ſhould conſult their talent, and, if they find it defective, they ſhould ſtop at once. But if they have not ſenſe enough to diſcover their want of ſenſe, their friends ſhould be ſo civil and obliging to them as to direct their eyes, not to Jeruſalem, but ſomewhere elſe; becauſe a miniſter, deſti-

tute

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tute of common ſenſe, if there is ſuch a character in life, though adorned with all the embelliſhments of literature, would be conſidered as a pedant; though clothed with the garments of a venerable character, would be the object of deriſion and contempt.

Were a man, of this complexion, acquainted with all the languages of the globe, from the original Hebrew to the modern Engliſh; were he inſtructed in all the ſyſtems of philoſophy, from Pythagoras to Locke; were he verſed in all the ſchemes of divinity, from the firſt religion of Adam to the preſent modifications of Chriſtian preſbytery; were he ſkilled in all the political conſtitutions of government, from the foundation of the Aſſyrian empire by Nimrod, down to the reign of king George the third; and yet withal were a child in common ſenſe; the ſum of his character would be, that he is a learned fool.

Such a man muſt be deſpiſed. A mortal may

may as well expect an exemption from death, as a man of this ſtamp hope for an exemption from contempt. As his imprudence has thruſt him into an office, for which nature had diſqualified him, ſo his imprudence will puſh him on to a thouſand actions offenſive to men of a juſt way of thinking. His wild and ungoverned fancy will ever be an overmatch for his feeble judgment, and too much learning would make him mad. So eſſential an ingredient in the miniſterial character is good ſenſe, that a man may as well expect fruit from a barren tree, as reſpect from a weak judgment. SERM. XXI.

A ſecond preſervative againſt contempt in a miniſter, is a good education. Natural good ſenſe is, indeed, the ſolid baſis of reſpect; but learning muſt be joined to it in a man of a learned profeſſion. The powers of the mind never exert their proper energy, till once they are matured by ſtudy. It is the culture of the earth, which enriches the ſoil; it is the culture of the faculties,

which

SERM. XXI. which enriches the ſoul*. Bright improvements in a bright underſtanding, are like letters of gold on a ſtatue of marble. They exhibit an uncommon ſplendor, and ſtrike the ſpectator with amazement. Literary accompliſhments give a luſtre to character; a luſtre, without which a miniſterial character muſt be full of darkneſs.

It is true, when Chriſtianity was firſt publiſhed to the world, the miraculous effuſions of ſupernatural light ſuperſeded the neceſſity of human learning; and men were better preachers *then*, without ſtudy, than the beſt of us are *now*, even with it.

But as that bleſſed and memorable æra is long ſince elapſed, and men attain knowledge by induſtry, and not by inſpiration, human learning is eſſentially requiſite, ſucceſsfully to illuſtrate divine truths. "He that

" is

* Like the rough diamond, as it leaves the mine,
Only in little breakings ſhews its light,
Till artful poliſhing has made it fine;
Thus education makes the genius bright.
THE GENTLE SHEPHERD.

" is a miniſter ſhould not be a novice"; he that is a guide ſhould not be blind. SERM. XXI.

And, indeed, there is not a church upon earth, which has more preſſing neceſſity for learning, than the church of Scotland. The miniſters of the church of Rome have little uſe for learning, becauſe they have only to exhort their hearers to be ignorant. The miniſters of the church of England have not any urgent need of learning, becauſe, by their external grandeur, they may plauſibly ſupport an internal dullneſs. But we, who are miniſters of a church, deſtitute of riches, power, pomp, authority, theſe gaudy outworks of reſpect, ſhould pay the ſtricteſt attention to the culture of the mind; for when once ignorance ſhakes hands with poverty, that moment commences the period of our final diſſolution.

In every age of the world, the regard ſhewn to literary merit has been conſiderable, and the rewards conferred upon it have been conſpicuous. Even in theſe days, in which we live, amidſt numberleſs faults,

we

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we have at leaſt this good quality, that ſuperior merit is ever honoured with ſuperior reſpect. Whilſt our learning flouriſhes, we bear ſome reſemblance to the livelineſs and verdure of the ſpring; when it decays, our bloom withers, and we reſemble the ſterility and nakedneſs of winter.

It is not enough, then, for a miniſter to have treaſures of knowledge in his cloſet; he ſhould have them in his head. When emergent difficulties demand ſolution, he ſhould recur to himſelf, not to his books; for a miniſter ſhould be a living library, not a living index.

A man, therefore, who, ſtarved in the rudiments of erudition, and furniſhed with none but crude and beggarly elements, aſſumes the character of a public inſtructor, muſt be the object of deſerved contempt; becauſe he is deſtitute of the very eſſentials of ſuch a character, meddles with things that are too high for him, and, to adopt the expreſſion of Dr. South, that learned and witty Divine, "ſtrikes his head

"againſt

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"against a pulpit, when he would make "a much better figure at the tail of a "plough".

But when I ſpeak of a good education, I do not mean that men ſhould cram their heads with a promiſcuous jumble of all the ſciences. This would defeat the very deſign of education. He who has too much learning, is, for the moſt part, as uſeleſs to the world, as he who has too little, and often miſſes the heart, by ſhooting over the head. He who would know every thing, will in effect know nothing; at leaſt, nothing to advantage. Great variety of books, like great variety of meats, ſerve only, firſt to pamper the appetite, and then to confound it.* A few ſtandard

* Voracious learning, often overfed,
Digeſts not into ſenſe her motley meal.
This book-caſe, with dark booty almoſt burſt,
This forager on other's wiſdom, leaves
Her native farm, her reaſon, quite untill'd;
With mix'd manure ſhe ſurfeits the rank ſoil,
Dung'd, but not dreſs'd, and rich to beggary.
YOUNG.

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ſtandard books, read with attention and digeſted with prudence, form the mind upon a regular ſyſtem, and form the man a regular ſcholar.

The ſciences, moſt intimately connected with the office of a clergyman, ſeem to be theſe, Theology, moral Philoſophy, Hiſtory, Rhetoric.

A miniſter ſhould be an excellent Divine. Nothing can be more ridiculous, than to ſee a Divine a ſtranger to Divinity. Like Apollos, he ſhould be mighty in the ſcriptures, and form his diſcourſes upon that model of ſublime and ſacred oratory. He ſhould be a complete maſter of our orthodox ſyſtem, and of the moſt flouriſhing deviations from it. He ſhould be particularly acquainted with the objections of the Deiſt, and the arguments by which they are moſt effectually anſwered—that, by theſe helps, he may be able to ſpeak with propriety, diſpute with acuteneſs, and inſtruct with authority.

A miniſter

A miniſter ſhould be an excellent moral philoſopher. Moral philoſophy is the firſt and beſt of human ſtudies, the ſum and ſubſtance of human learning. Its connection with Divinity is ſo cloſe, that a man may as well pretend to preach without a tongue, as to preach ſenſe without this accompliſhment. For as, in practice, a man's religion ſeldom ſurvives his morality, ſo, in ſpeculation, a mans' Divinity ſeldom ſurvives his philoſophy. SERM. XXI.

A miniſter ſhould be well acquainted with hiſtory. Hiſtory is the great magazine or ſtorehouſe, whence we extract, in miniature, a faithful deſcription of men, their ſentiments, maxims, manners, cuſtoms, characters, and ſprings of action. In hiſtory we ſee the progreſs and declenſion of virtue and vice, in every country, and in every period, with the interchanges of humility and pride, contentment and coveouſneſs, liberty and ſlavery, gentleneſs and cruelty, harmony and diſcord, peace and war, chequering the varied ſcene.

SERM. XXI. Theſe furniſh us with the beſt means of ſtoring our minds with knowledge, and conſequently of communicating knowledge to others.

A miniſter ſhould know a little of rhetoric, juſt as much as to prevent aukwardneſs, not ſo much as to produce affectation; for affectation in any man is ridiculous, but in a miniſter is highly offenſive.

As a member of eccleſiaſtical government, a miniſter ſhould be acquainted with the fundamental laws of the church, and ſuch fundamental laws of the ſtate as are connected with it.

I would not, however, exclude other ſciences, which may tend to finiſh the ſcholar, but theſe, I think, are abundantly ſufficient to complete the miniſter.

There is, nevertheleſs, one kind of knowledge which I had almoſt forgot, but which muſt not be omitted, and that is the knowledge of the world, without which the knowledge of books will only make us pedants. The knowledge of the world

gives a noble poliſh to our minds, rubs off our native ruſticity, ſoftens our manners, improves our addreſs, inſpires a modeſt aſſurance, and opens up a wide field of obſervation. SERM. XXI.

A miniſter, enriched with all theſe various branches of knowledge, bids fair for reſpect; but if, on a thorough examination of himſelf, he finds he is materially deficient in any, he ſhould take his hand from the ſpiritual plough; and, to follow out Dr. South's ſimile, put it to another plough much better ſuited to his capacity.

N. B. The whole of this diſcourſe was delivered at once; but, leſt the reader ſhould think it tedious, I have divided it into two.

SERMON XXII.

An ORDINATION SERMON.

TITUS 2, XV.

Let no man deſpiſe thee.

A Third preſervative againſt contempt in a miniſter, is to be a good preacher. Preaching is the proper buſineſs of the preacher, and to be expert at that ſhould be his ſtudy; for to be a bungler in his own profeſſion, muſt render him contempt-

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ible, though he were an adept in every other ſcience; and though poſſeſſed of every other accompliſhment, he would be conſidered as a quack. But a competent degree of perfection in this divine art paves the way to ſolid honour.

By a good preacher, I do not mean a man of noiſe and geſture, who preaches up himſelf, and not his ſubject; and goes to the pulpit, as many go to the church, to be ſeen of men. The action of the theatre, and the bombaſt of romances, are unworthy of the pulpit, and diſgrace its ſolemnity. But, by a good preacher, I underſtand a man, who, from his original good ſenſe, improved by a good education, enters deep into the ſpirit of the ſacred text; ſpeaks what he feels, and feels what is juſt; who, in his lectures, is clear and copious; in his ſermons, accurate and perſuaſive; in both, more attentive to ſenſe than ſound, to dignity of ſentiment, than loftineſs of ſtyle; who manages his diſcourſes with ſuch propriety, that, in each

each, there is as much ſimplicity as will render it inſtructive to the vulgar, and as much ſublimity as will render it acceptable to the refined. SERM. XXII.

A good preacher ſuits his ſubjects to his audience; expatiates on the evidences of chriſtianity where infidelity prevails; urges to the practice chriſtian virtues, where vice predominates; and endeavours, with modeſty, to illuſtrate the obſcure paſſages of ſcripture, without darkening the clear ones by ſtudied artifice.

A good preacher does not dive into myſteries, or pretend to explain them; but paſſes them over in ſilence, as ſubjects equally unintelligible to his audience and to himſelf. And, indeed, what is it leſs, than the moſt arrogant preſumption in any man, to pretend to know that which God has concealed from human knowledge, or to inveſtigate that which God has locked up from the keeneſt reſearches of man's penetration?

A good

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A good preacher adapts his diſcourſes to the capacities of his hearers, and does not affect the falſe ſublime. Learned diſquiſitions, above common comprehenſion, debaſe the pulpit; and a man may, with as good a grace, read a lecture on aſtronomy to an ox, as preach abſtruſe diſcourſes to men who have but plain underſtandings. There is a peculiar majeſty in unaffected plainneſs; a ſubſtantial beauty, which needs neither paint nor patch. All dreſs ſuppoſes imperfection: truth needs not the aids of ornament. A glittering outſide often indicates a trifling inſide. Truth loves to be naked, and is not aſhamed.

A good preacher does not always deal in generals, but frequently inſiſts upon particulars. To tell men, in general, that they are ſinners, and if they repent not, that they will go to hell, is but a vague way of preaching, and will, at beſt, make but a vague impreſſion. But if you tell them, that to cheat or overreach their neighbours, to lie againſt the light of truth, and

and walk in the paths of cruelty, will bring down upon them certain deſtruction; if you tell them, that whoever is addicted to ſwearing, drinking, licentiouſneſs, will, in ſpite of mercy, pull down the ſtroke of impending juſtice, then you ſpeak to every man's conſcience, and every man knows what you mean; and if any ſpark of ingenuity remain in the boſom of the hearer, this addreſs will carry conviction to his heart, and force him, on his peril, to relinquiſh either his conſcience or his crimes. SERM. XXII.

I would not have a ſermon to be crouded with wit, nor would I wiſh it to be totally void of it. Too much might detract from its gravity; none at all might render it languid. A dull, inſipid diſcourſe, without nerves, without ſpirit, without unction, though ſeriouſly delivered, and ſuperlatively orthodox, makes but a drowſy audience and a drowſy religion; whereas proper ſtrokes of grave and genuine wit, interſperſed at proper diſtances, like ſtars

in

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in the firmament, give life and vivacity to a performance, and ſtimulate the attention of an audience.

I would not have a preacher to be a ſervile imitator. Servile imitation ſuppoſes the want of originality, which derogates from the merit of the man, and, of conſequence, from the merit of the preacher.

I would not have a preacher to borrow much. Borrowing from abroad ſuppoſes a deficiency at home, and deficiency at home leads to contempt from abroad. Few are eſteemed, who are much, in any ſenſe, on the borrowing hand. Beſides, he who retails old, patched, ſecond-hand preachings, cannot ſo properly be called a ſermon-maker, as a ſermon-broker.

I would not have a preacher to be a ſlave to his papers. For my own part, I ſee no intrinſic evil in them, and am ſorry, that the prejudices of our country are ſo ſtrong againſt the uſe of them. Yet I cannot help thinking, that he, who pays little attention to his notes, delivers his

his ſentiments with more grace and energy, than he who ſlaviſhly conſults them; but if a man's memory does not ſerve him to repeat diſtinctly, it is better to read, than to repeat ungracefully. SERM. XXII.

I would not have a miniſter to be long in his performances. Long preachings are a certain mark of a bad preacher, who makes up, in quantity, what he lacks in quality. A ſhort preacher generally ſays more in half an hour, than a long one does in half a day. And to ſay the truth, I know nothing that tedious preachings are good for, but to make one half of an audience deſert the church, and the other half fall aſleep when they are in it.

I would wiſh a preacher to have all his diſcourſes ſeaſoned with the ſpirit of the goſpel. The goſpel is one of thoſe things, of which a preacher ſhould not be aſhamed.

With regard to manner, an eaſy, elegant addreſs is to be wiſhed for, pomp to be avoided, and rather no action than too much

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much. In this reſpect, even aukwardneſs is preferable to parade. The reaſon is this; aukwardneſs may be complexional, or proceed from unacquaintance with the world; but parade ever flows from a deſire of being conſpicuous upon falſe grounds.

A good preacher diverſifies his manner according to the diverſity of his ſubjects, but, upon the whole, is grave and ſolemn, and ever at the remoteſt diſtance from any thing that is light and trifling; as he knows that a ludicrous face is the moſt unbecoming that can poſſibly be put upon a ſerious religion.

The fourth preſervative againſt contempt in a miniſter, is to be a good man. This is the laſt qualification, and, I may add, the beſt. This is the top and crowning point, which finally completes the character. Without this, the deepeſt penetration of mind degenerates into a worthleſs ſagacity, which transforms the image of God into the image of the Devil. Without this, the artificial ſubtleties of philoſophy

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ſophy are but the ſcaffolds of pedantry, or the props of vice. Without this, the ſublimeſt exertions of eloquence are but ſounding braſs and tinkling cymbals, "like the tale of an idiot, full of ſound and fury, ſignifying nothing." But an uniform ſublimity of conduct gives a brilliancy to each perfection, and ſheds a luſtre on each accompliſhment.

It is true, ſpecious and ſhowy endowments may aſtoniſh the croud, and make the vulgar ſtare; but it is the native complexion of the mind which fixes the value of the man, and the confirmed habits of virtue only which call forth, from ſurrounding ſpectators, the liberal ſentiments of love and eſteem. The heart is the true ſtandard of the character; the life is the tranſcript of the heart. Our principles are the ſprings of our actions; our actions are the touchſtones of our principles.

A miniſter, therefore, if he wiſhes for reſpect, muſt join to the qualities of a good

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good head, the beſt of all qualities, a good heart; and prove his being poſſeſſed of it, by a good life: for a tree is known by its fruit, and a fountain by its ſtreams. Vice in a public character is a production of a monſtrous birth, and cannot be viewed but with horror. But in ſterling worth there is a kind of magnetiſm, which attracts, at once, the eye and heart of the beholder; nay, may I be allowed the boldneſs of the thought, there is a kind of omnipotence in ſteady virtue, which compels mankind to reſpect it, even againſt their will.

A miniſter, deſtitute of truth and candour, is the moſt worthleſs thing in nature, the moſt deſpicable character on earth. He is a double-minded man, a ſervant of two maſters; in the pulpit, the ſervant of God; out of it, the ſervant of the Devil. He is the center of two contradictions; he preaches againſt his life, and lives againſt his preaching; by profeſſion a ſaint, and by practice a miſcreant. What can be ſo ſhocking to the ſentiments of mankind,

as

as to hear a drunkard preach against drunkenneſs, a miſer againſt covetouſneſs, a debauchee againſt licentiouſneſs, or a ſatyriſt againſt revenge? Nature cries ſhame on ſuch hypocriſy, and the man's heart muſt give the lie to his tongue. The common feelings of men muſt revolt at ſuch duplicity, and their common ſenſe exclaim againſt ſuch barefaced impudence. SERM. XXII.

A miniſter, then, in order to procure reſpect, muſt be a good man. For it will not do for a man to be at variance with himſelf, his practice to be oppoſite to his profeſſion, and his pretended principles the reverſe of his real ones. Averſion, hatred, contempt, muſt ever be the conſequence of ſuch baſe and diſingenuous conduct.

I, therefore, repeat it once more, and indeed it cannot be too often repeated, a miniſter, in order to procure reſpect, muſt be a good man. But when I ſay this, I do not wiſh to give you the idea of a man of a moroſe and gloomy diſpoſition, who is an enemy to the amuſements of innocence, and

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dead to the pleaſures of life; a man, whoſe face is wrapped up in the clouds of melancholy, and on whoſe tongue the cant of religion ever dwells. Alas! theſe are but the ſplendid enſigns of hypocriſy, and often indicate the abſence of religion. There may be much religion in the look, when there is but little in the heart; there may be much ſhow, when there is but little ſubſtance. True goodneſs, like true happineſs, does not affect the pomp and ſplendor of a glittering outſide; but, ſubſtantial in its nature, diſdains to counterfeit appearances. One is apt to ſuſpect a man's goodneſs to be theatrical, when of his goodneſs he is perpetually making theatrical diſplays. A good man never wears the garb of more ſolemnity than he poſſeſſes, nor wiſhes to poſſeſs more than is rational. He does not diſtort the features of his mind or face, to aſſume a borrowed look; becauſe he knows, that whatever is ſtrained is unnatural, and whatever is unnatural is diſguſting.

But,

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But, by a good man, I wiſh to give you the idea of a man of ſteady faith, unaffected piety, rational benevolence, and inflexible integrity; whoſe ſermons are the picture of his life, and whoſe life is a commentary on his ſermons; whoſe ſoul is ſuperior to the groſs indulgences of vice, and whoſe affections are refined by the ſublime entertainments of virtue.

In ſhort, a miniſter ſhould be religious, but not noiſy; pious, but not peeviſh; devout, but not moroſe; ſerious, but not ſuperſtitious: he ſhould be humble, but not grovelling; chaſte, but not monkiſh; temperate, but not too abſtemious; charitable, but not oſtentatious: he ſhould have gravity without gloomineſs, and chearfulneſs without levity: he ſhould be good-natured, but not ſilly; obliging, but not officious; ſocial, but not common: he ſhould have affability without meanneſs, complaiſance without fawning, an apparent openneſs, but in ſome caſes a real reſerve. He ſhould temper the dignity of

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the miniſter with the familiarity of the man, the ſpirit of the gentleman with the candour of the chriſtian, the wiſdom of the ſerpent with the innocence of the dove.

This aſſemblage of amiable qualities will ſecure him univerſal reſpect. His character will be reſpected while he lives, his memory will be reſpected when he dies; and in that country where death is an eternal ſtranger, he will be reſpected by angels,—he will be reſpected by God. O goodneſs, thou queen of beauties! who would not wiſh to poſſeſs thy charms? Who would not wiſh to be clothed with thy honours? Who would not wiſh to wear thy crown?

Now, my reverend fathers and brethren, to relieve your patience, upon which, I am afraid, I have already encroached, I will truſt to your own prudence the application of what has been advanced, and will conclude a long diſcourſe with a ſhort obſervation. Let us reſpect ourſelves, then men will reſpect us; let us revere our character, then

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then men will revere it. Dignified, as we are, with the illuſtrious title of ambaſſadors from God, let us diſcover ſentiments worthy of our exalted maſter, and actions worthy of our exalted character. Let our minds be ſtored with uſeful knowledge, and our lives be adorned with active virtue. Whatever we let ſlip, let us hold faſt our integrity, and with approving conſciences return to the duſt. Then, when the grave ſhall reſtore its ſacred truſt, the ſea give up its dead, and earth and hell releaſe their priſoners, ſaints ſhall embrace us with celeſtial love, angels welcome us to their ſweet ſociety, the Redeemer ſet on our heads the immortal crown, the King of Kings become our refuge, and the God of Gods himſelf our everlaſting habitation. Amen!

SERMON XXIII.

A SYNOD SERMON.

HEBREWS 12, XIV.

Follow peace with all men.

THE introduction of the goſpel was a proclamation of peace. Whilſt the nativity of Chriſt was celebrated, the heavenly hoſt praiſed God, and cried aloud, "Glory to God in the higheſt, and on earth peace, good-will towards men"* SERM. XXIII.

* Luke ii, 14.

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Peace was the ſacred legacy, which the ſon of God, at his departure from the world, bequeathed to his church. "Peace "I leave with you, my peace I give unto "you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you."* The ſpirit of the goſpel is a ſpirit of peace, and to inſpire that ſpirit into man is the deſign of the goſpel. Wiſely are its maxims calculated to ſoften our rugged and ſtubborn diſpoſitions, and to mould us into that mild and gentle temper, which will render our conduct acceptable to men, and our conſcience acceptable to God.

In heatheniſm, there were two illuſtrious temples; the temple of virtue, and the temple of honour. Into the temple of honour no man was admitted, but he who paſſed to it through the temple of virtue. Solid virtue has been eſteemed in every age the only path to ſolid honour. So in chriſtianity, there are two illuſtrious temples;

* John xiv, 27.

ples; the temple of peace, and the temple of happineſs. Into the temple of happineſs no man can be admitted, but he who paſſes to it through the temple of peace. Does any man wiſh, then, to enjoy happineſs at laſt with God? let him now cultivate peace with men.—"Follow peace with all men."

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My deſign, in handling this ſubject, is,

1ſt. To point out the reaſons why a ſpirit of peace ſhould be cultivated with men.

2dly. To ſhew that this ſpirit muſt be univerſal—"with all men."

3dly. To conſider what is implied in the expreſſion, "Follow peace."

And, laſtly, to conclude with ſome reflections, connected with the ſubject.

1ſt. I am to point out the reaſons why a ſpirit of peace ſhould be cultivated with men; and theſe are, that this ſpirit is a ſpirit of humanity, it is a ſpirit attended with great advantage, and it is likewiſe a ſpirit of obedience.

1ſt. A

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1ſt. A ſpirit of peace is a ſpirit of humanity. Man, by the very law of his birth, is a naked and helpleſs creature, full of wants, and full of fears; full of wants which he cannot ſupply, full of fears which he cannot remove. Left therefore to himſelf in the early periods of life, death would be his only nurſe, and the grave his only ſhelter. This plainly demonſtrates that man, in the very rudiments of his exiſtence, neceſſarily tends towards ſociety, without whoſe friendly aid he would languiſh in the bud and periſh, like a bloſſom nipped by froſt, or tender graſs beat down by ſtorms.

Now, of every ſociety peace muſt be the baſis; to every ſocial obligation peace is eſſential. The inhabitants of the foreſt, the lion, the tyger, and the wolf, avoid incorporation, and ſeek their lodging in the ſolitary deſart. But where creatures of a milder temper join in ſociety, the cement which unites them muſt be peace. Take that cement away, ſociety that moment, like

like a tottering fabrick, muſt fall in pieces. Let peace be excluded from the abodes of men, and the world would become a ſcene of horror. A ſea where all is ſtorm and tempeſt, a ſky where all is turbulence and thunder, a wilderneſs where all is uproar and barbarity, exhibit only an imperfect picture of a ſociety of men who have extinguiſhed every gentle feeling in their boſoms, and abandoned their hearts to the fury of contending paſſions. SERM. XXIII.

A ſpirit, therefore, of contention and hoſtility in man, a creature formed, not for aſſault and violence, but for benevolence and friendſhip, muſt be a ſpirit of inhumanity and barbariſm. It is a ſpirit inconſiſtent with thoſe wants and infirmities to which our nature is ſubjected, and with thoſe mutual endearments which ſmooth the rugged paths of life, and ſweeten the bitter draughts of mortality. A ſpirit of ſtrife, animoſity and diſcord, baniſhes every kind affection from the boſom, blots out the ſuperſcription of the Divinity upon the ſoul,

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ſoul, undermines the foundation of ſocial intercourſe, and paves the way to ſcenes of cruelty and devaſtation—as the conflict of jarring elements produces earthquakes, whirlwinds, and tempeſt.

Hence it is manifeſt, that the ſpirit of peace, which is the reverſe of the ſpirit of hoſtility, and is regulated by principles more ſoft and amiable, is a ſpirit of reaſon, of prudence, and humanity. It is a ſpirit, which flows from a conſciouſneſs of the frailties and neceſſities inherent in our nature. It is a ſpirit, which is founded upon a heart-felt ſenſe of our mutual dependence, and, of conſequence, our need of mutual ſupport. It is a ſpirit, which tends to promote the improvement of thoſe generous and lovely qualities, which are ornamental to human nature, and eſſential to human felicity.

2dly. A ſpirit of peace is a ſpirit attended with great advantage. Populous and powerful kingdoms decline and periſh by publick wars. Flouriſhing and reſpectable churches

churches are rent and ruined by feuds and schism. Private men fall inglorious victims to private resentment. The spirit of division and contest sours the milk of human kindness, turns concord to hostility, and buries harmony in the chaos of confusion. This envenomed spirit, like a domestic vulture, gnaws upon the heart in which it rages, and fills the soul with grief and anguish. With an officious malice it throws a cloud over the fair face of prosperity, and makes adversity quite insupportable. It spitefully imbitters the sweet moments of life, and renders death a dismal passage from transient pain to endless sorrow. SERM. XXIII.

Hence it follows, that the spirit of peace, which procures us an exemption from these calamities, must be a spirit attended with singular advantage. Were the spirit of peace carefully cultivated, nations would not wage war with nations, nor would brothers fall by brothers' hands. Were the spirit of peace carefully cultivated, churches would not foster in their bosom oppression

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oppreſſion and violence, nor cheriſh the black and fiery ſeeds of perſecution. Were the ſpirit of peace carefully cultivated, the private man would not plunge the dagger into his neighbour's vitals, nor ſtain his hand with the blood of innocence. Were the ſpirit of peace carefully cultivated, conſcience would be free from thoſe tormenting ſcourges, which are inſeparable from guilt and ſtrife. Were the ſpirit of peace carefully cultivated, every ſituation would produce contentment, every bleſſing would produce enjoyment. This divine ſpirit adds a new brightneſs to proſperity, and ſweetly extracts the venom from adverſity. This divine ſpirit gives a becoming luſtre to our virtues, and makes even our imperfections pardonable. This divine ſpirit ſucks the poiſon from the ſting of death, and makes the king of terrors a meſſenger of joy.

3dly. A ſpirit of peace is a ſpirit of obedience. It is the duty of the ſubject to pay a proper regard to the injunctions of the

the ſovereign; obedience is the moſt valu- SERM. XXIII.
able teſt of loyalty. Profeſſions of ſubmiſ-
ſion are but empty ſounds—it is actual
ſubmiſſion only that can prove theſe pro-
feſſions to be ſincere. Men's words, like
men, are flexible; but deeds, like truth,
are unchangeable. Now, this precept,
"follow peace with all men," deſcends
from the univerſal ſovereign, and muſt of
conſequence be obligatory upon all his ſub-
jects. And in another place the ſame au-
thority enjoins—"recompence to no man
"evil for evil, but live peaceably with all
"men." It is God who commands; let
man obey.

I proceed, now, to the ſecond part of the diſcourſe, which was to ſhew, that the ſpirit of peace muſt be univerſal—"with "all men." Partial reſpect to this commandment is labour loſt; uniformity alone makes obedience acceptable. Would we, therefore, have our conduct to quadrate with our duty, we muſt cultivate a ſpirit

of

SERM. XXIII. of peace with all—friends, relations, acquaintances, enemies.

1ſt. We muſt cultivate a ſpirit of peace with our friends. This is a leſſon plain, and needs not the light of religion to teach it; this is a leſſon eaſy, and needs not the authority of religion to inforce it. It is a maxim ſelf-evident: for, as the greater always includes the leſs, ſo friendſhip muſt always include peace. The man, therefore, who cheriſhes the ſeeds of ſtrife with him, to whom he profeſſes an unfeigned attachment, diſcovers a baſe and hollow heart, ſhews that he has nothing but the ſhadow of friendſhip, and, like Brutus, who ſtabbed his benefactor, makes his face a vizard to his ſoul, and treacherouſly acts the part of a foe under the appearance of a friend. From ſuch falſe and hollow friends, O God, protect the upright! Protect the upright from the man, under whoſe tongue is a ſerpent, in whoſe ſmile is a dagger, and in whoſe heart are the ſtings of ſcorpions!

2dly.

2dly. We muſt cultivate a ſpirit of SERM. XXIII. peace with our relations. This, perhaps, is not a taſk ſo eaſy; and pity it is, if it is more difficult. One would imagine, that, though religion had been ſilent upon this point, the voice of nature would teach her children to eſtabliſh an everlaſting harmony with thoſe, with whom they are connected by the indiſſoluble ties of blood. Yet, alas! experience atteſts, that oppoſite or interfering intereſts often burſt this ſacred bond, and diſcloſe this mournful truth, *viz.* that they who are moſt near in the line of affinity, are often moſt remote in the line of affection. The hiſtory of Joſeph is a melancholy proof of this aſſertion. But, my Friends, did our ſentiments correſpond with our religion, no ſanguine proſpects of preferment, no curſed graſpings after gold, no worſhip of the giddy goddeſs, fortune, no indulgence of voluptuous appetites, would ever force us to diſſolve this ſacred

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union, to break its bonds aſunder, and caſt its cords away.

3dly. We muſt cultivate a ſpirit of peace with our neighbours and acquaintances. It is a common remark, that the neareſt neighbours are not always the beſt friends, and I heartily wiſh I could confute the obſervation. To a benevolent mind it is a mournful ſpectacle, to behold what ſtrife, what variance, what diſcord, what obloquy, what hatred, what revenge ſubſiſt among men; among men, who are linked together by the ſtrongeſt ties of nature, intereſt and duty; among men, who have the ſame faith, the ſame hope, the ſame baptiſm; among men, who are worſhippers of the ſame God, diſciples of the ſame Saviour, and expectants of the ſame heaven. Alas! how mean, how baſe, how wretched is it in a being, who is deſcended from God, and formed for the delights of immortality, for the ſordid and periſhing intereſts of this life, to ſully the glory of his celeſtial origin, to ſacrifice each

each true enjoyment, and deliver up his eternal jewel to the common enemy of man! Let then, my Friends, neither the fear of loſs nor the hope of gain, the politician's ſmile nor the tyrant's frown, the pomp of proſperity nor the gloom of adverſity, ever ſeparate us from the love of peace. SERM. XXIII.

4thly. We muſt cultivate a ſpirit of peace with our enemies. This, I confeſs, is a hard duty; but hard as it is, it is nevertheleſs neceſſary. To animate us to the performance of it, let us remember, that the greater the trial, the greater is the virtue; the more difficult the conteſt, the more glorious the victory. It is a fundamental law of our religion, that we ſhould love our enemies; not, indeed, with a love of affection—that is impoſſible—but with a love of beneficence.

The ground of this diſtinction appears to be this. Our affections, which flow from our animal part, are excited by the impulſe of external objects on the ſenſes

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and the fancy without the conſent or approbation of the will—of conſequence, are beyond the limits of our own authority. But our actions, which are the offspring of choice and reaſon, cannot exiſt without the conſent and approbation of the will, and therefore muſt be ſubject to our own juriſdiction. Hence I ſhould conceive, that we are not accountable for our affections, becauſe they are inſtinctive, and without our power; but accountable for our actions, becauſe they are deliberate, and within our power.

Though, therefore, it is confeſſed, that we cannot love our enemies with the ſame cordiality, as we love our friends; though we cannot love an object, which, to our view, includes every ugly and hateful quality, with the ſame affection as we love an object, which, in our eye, poſſeſſes every amiable and endearing excellence; yet, without all doubt, even with reſpect to our enemies, we can check the ſallies of reſentment, cultivate a ſpirit of peace, and perform

perform acts of generosity, kindness, and compassion. Let then, my Friends, no rooted prejudice, no partial antipathy, no desire of revenge, no spirit of resentment, obstruct the circulation of good offices, or induce us to live in strife and hatred with those on earth, with whom we hope to live, ere long, in love and peace in heaven. SERM. XXIII.

I proceed, now, to the third part of the discourse, which was, to consider what is implied in the expression, "Follow peace." It implies activity, resolution, perseverance.

1st. It implies activity. To follow an object is an expression, which conveys to the mind the idea of motion; and the slowness or rapidity of the motion must ever be in proportion to the worth or insignificancy of the object, to which the motion is directed. If the object appear trifling, the prosecution of it will be dull and languid; if the object appear important, the pursuit will be quick and sprightly. Now, peace, as has been shewn, is an object of the utmost moment, the

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greateſt of all ſublunary bleſſings, and indeed the foundation of every other. To follow, therefore, this deſirable object with any kind of propriety, or in a manner any how ſuited to its real worth, the activity of the purſuit muſt be commenſurate to the excellence of the object; that is, the purſuit muſt be, in the higheſt degree, ſpirited and active.

2dly. To follow peace implies reſolution: without this, we will not follow it long. A ſoul wavering and unſteady, like a floating ſurge, is in perpetual fluctuation. A ſoul cowardly and timid, like a deceitful bow, ſtarts back from the firſt ſhadow of danger. Steadineſs, therefore, to compoſe the paſſions, and courage to repel temptations, are eſſential to the proſecution of peace, and muſt be included in the precept.

3dly. To follow peace implies perſeverance. To follow peace a while, and then to flag, will, by no means, intitle us to the praiſe of having fulfilled the command

mand of our Saviour. It is in vain to follow peace at all, if we do not follow it for ever. It is the character of cowards and deſerters to fly; it is the character of Chriſtians to preſs on. In the purſuit of peace, then, it is plain, there is no loitering, no ſtanding ſtill, no going back, no wandering from the road, no diverting to the right hand or to the left—no— but a puſhing on, with redoubled ardour, till we arrive at the goal, till we arrive at an immortal freedom from the vaſſalage of diſcord, till we have fortified ourſelves within our own tranquillity, till we have obtained a complete victory over every obſtacle to peace, and have incloſed heaven within the ſanctuary of our boſom. SERM. XXIII.

I have now finiſhed the text: all that remains is to finiſh the diſcourſe.

Reverend fathers, and brethren, I pretend not to be your inſtructor. An attempt to act in that capacity would be a proof of the moſt arrogant preſumption. I would only hope, that, in conformity to your

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venerable character, you will ever prove yourſelves to be the ſervants of the prince of peace. Sorry ſhould I be to think, that any man, who preaches to others the doctrine of peace and charity, ſhould himſelf be materially deficient in theſe important virtues. Sorry ſhould I be to think, that we, who are ſet like a city on a hill, whoſe eminence prevents its concealment, ſhould, by nouriſhing a ſpirit of malevolence and diſcord, bring diſhonour on our exalted ſtation. Thus our being conſpicuous would only ſerve to make us contemptible. God forbid, that ſentiments inconſiſtent with our office ſhould ever creep into our ſouls; but let our boſoms cheriſh, and our lives diſplay, the amiable principles of love and peace.

To conclude; let us all be perſuaded to follow peace. It is a ſpirit of humanity; therefore let us follow it. It is a ſpirit attended with great advantage; therefore let us follow it. It is likewiſe a ſpirit of obedience; therefore let us follow it. Let

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us follow it, not partially, but univerſally. Have we friends? let us follow it with them. Have we relations? let us follow it with them. Have we acquaintances? let us follow it with them. Have we enemies? let us even follow it with them. Let us follow it with activity; let us follow it with reſolution; let us follow it with perſeverance. Happy man! to whom this rule applies: happy we! if it apply to us. Should our lot be caſt in times of peril, and danger threaten us on every ſide; ſhould diſorder and convulſion ſeize the nations, and trumpets ſound the alarms of war; into the aſylum of peace we may retreat, and there find a happy ſhelter from the raging tempeſts. The billows of adverſity, which drown a bad man in deſpair, diſturb not the quiet of that man, whoſe heart is eſtabliſhed in peace. But, as high Olympus rears his head above the clouds, and with a placid brow looks down upon the ſtorm, and unmoved hears the roaring thunder, ſo the good man,

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man, who dwells in peace, raiſes his ſoul above the ſtorms of mortality, and diſplays the brightneſs of heaven reflected from a countenance uneclipſed by the ſhades of misfortune. And even at laſt, when the body languiſhes, and feeble nature ſinks in death, the ſpirit of peace will qualify the ſoul for the enjoyments of a country, where ſtrife can never enter, but where harmony erects her everlaſting throne. Amen!

(A Sermon preached before the Synod of Dumfries.)

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SERMON XXIV.

On a FUTURE STATE.

1 PETER 1, 3, 4.

Bleſſed be the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt from the dead; to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

THIS paſſage contains a variety of important propoſitions, worthy of our notice, expreſſive of our duty, and conducive to our happineſs. Perhaps there are few paſſages to be found in the Bible (I need hardly ſay in any other book) where ſo much

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much ſenſe is wrapped up in ſo few words, where dignity of ſentiment is ſo happily united with dignity of ſtile.

The propoſition, with which it begins, is a ſong of praiſe to God for his marvellous goodneſs to men—"Bleſſed be God." The ſecond propoſition informs us of the unalterable connection which ſubſiſts between God and Jeſus Chriſt—"the God and Father of Jeſus Chriſt." The third propoſition expreſſes to us the intimate connection which ſubſiſts between Chriſt and us—"Our Lord." The fourth propoſition diſplays the loving kindneſs of God, in bringing us from a ſtate of dejection to a ſtate of hope, as the foundation of the above gratitude—"who, accor-
"ding to his abundant mercy, hath be-
"gotten us again to the lively hope of an
"inheritance." The fifth propoſition points out the method, by which this exaltation is effected—"by the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt from the dead." And the ſixth and laſt propoſition intimates to us the

the nature of that inheritance, to the hope of which Chriſtianity exalts us—"an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

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It would require however more time, than you perhaps would willingly allow me, to go through all theſe propoſitions, and do juſtice to each. I will not, therefore, unneceſſarily try your patience by attempting it, but will confine myſelf to three of them, to which, I hope, all the reſt may be juſtly referred. And that I may execute my purpoſe with the greater clearneſs and preciſion, I will take the liberty of tranſpoſing the order of the text, that is, I will conſider the laſt propoſition in the firſt place, and ſo go backwards to the beginning.

1ſt. I will endeavour to illuſtrate the nature of our future inheritance, expreſſed thus in the text, "an inheritance incor- "ruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth "not away."—that this grand object of our hope, once fairly eſtabliſhed, may regulate

SERM. XXIV. regulate our ideas in the future parts of the diſcourſe.

2dly. I will endeavour to illuſtrate the goodneſs of God, in bringing us to the hope of this inheritance, thus expreſſed in the text, "who, according to his abun-"dant mercy, hath begotten us again to the lively hope of an inheritance."

And 3dly. I will endeavour to illuſtrate the gratitude which is due from us to God, in return for this goodneſs, thus expreſſed in the text, "Bleſſed be the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt."

1ſt. I am to illuſtrate the nature of our future inheritance. To exhibit a gay and florid deſcription of heaven, the ideas of which we derive, not from the ſacred oracles of truth, but from the falſe oracles of our own fancy, may be ſuitable to the genius of the Mahometan religion, which is confeſſedly nothing but a fiction, but is moſt eſſentially repugnant to the ſpirit of the Chriſtian religion, which, I hope, we all believe to be a reality.

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As the circumſtances of our future felicity are matter of pure revelation, I will not venture upon one idea, which does not iſſue from this ſacred fountain of our knowledge. The text preſents us with three grand ideas of it. It is incorruptible; It is undefiled; It fadeth not away.

1ſt. It is incorruptible. It requires ſome degree of attention to comprehend the clear import of this term. For if incorruptible be underſtood as oppoſed to ſinful, then it coincides with the ſecond idea—undefiled. Or if it be underſtood as oppoſed to periſhable, then it coincides with the laſt idea—fadeth not away. Therefore, I incline to think, that incorruptible ſtands here for pure, ſpiritual, refined, in oppoſition to groſs, ſenſual, earthy; and thus forms a notion of happineſs from the other two notions perfectly diſtinct.

It is a mortifying truth, that our preſent inheritance is of a groſs and mixed nature. It is earth, a ſubſtance compounded

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ded of groſs and thick materials, and conſequently muſt be in its very eſſence and original, like ſtagnated waters, ſubject to corruption. The enjoyments, which ſpring from this inheritance are, like itſelf, groſs and mixed. For it will ever hold true in the Syſtem of nature, that the features and complexion of the offspring muſt reſemble the features and complexion of the parent, from which they originate. A muddy fountain cannot ſend forth clear ſtreams, nor can a groſs cauſe produce a pure effect. There is not one earthly ſatisfaction, which is not in its nature groſs and corrupt. I do not mean to include pleaſures of a moral and religious kind, ſuch as piety, benevolence, and friendſhip; for theſe, properly ſpeaking, are not earthly pleaſures, but the firſt dawnings or foretaſtes of that brighter and better inheritance, "where moth and ruſt cannot "corrupt, nor thieves break through and "ſteal." But I ſay, there is not one ſatisfaction merely earthly, which is not in its

its nature groſs and corrupt. There is a kind of ruſt or muddineſs, which, like the creeping ivy that twines round the wall, covers the face of each terreſtrial good, and ſpoils the beauty of its faireſt proſpects. Hence ariſes the utter impoſſibility of man's happineſs from ſenſual enjoyment; becauſe, in order to conſtitute real felicity, there muſt be a ſimilarity and correſpondence between the ſoul which enjoys, and the object which is enjoyed. SERM. XXIV.

But the objects of ſenſe, though admirably adapted to the nature of the body, which is compoſed of the ſame groſs materials with themſelves, yet are totally inadequate to the nature of the ſoul, which is of divine, celeſtial birth. And there is ſomething within us, which, in ſpite of ourſelves and all our ſtudied ſophiſtry, upbraids us with the baſeneſs of every groſs attachment, and tells us to our face, that it is a falling off from our original greatneſs, and infinitely below the vaſt ideas of that felicity, which the ſoul is authorized

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to expect, and to which, in her lucid intervals, ſhe ardently aſpires.

But our future inheritance is very different from our preſent; it is pure, ſpiritual, refined. The country where that inheritance lies, is pure. It is Heaven, the unſpotted habitation of the Deity, into which nothing that is groſs or impure can ever enter. Angels for ever guard the ſacred territory, that no approaching miſchief may taint the nature of its happineſs, or ſully the unclouded ſplendors of that unclouded region. The King and Governor of that country is pure. It is God; a being, whoſe indiviſible eſſence eternally excludes every mixture of corruption; a being, who is purity itſelf, and who delights in the purity of all around him, becauſe it is the reſemblance of his own nature, reflected back from his own works. The inhabitants of that country are pure. They are Angels, who have retained the image of their maker, and the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect, who have

have left all their droſs behind them in the grave, and are now elevated to the brightneſs and perfection of angels. The enjoyments of that country are pure. Knowledge is pure, love is pure, pleaſure is pure. The enjoyments muſt be ſuch as are ſuited to the purity of God, the purity of heaven, and the capacities of a purified ſoul, or they would be no enjoyments at all. It is this correſpondence between the faculty and the object, between the ſoul and the enjoyment, which is in reality the eſſence of happineſs, which imparts a double reliſh to every pleaſure, and heightens, if poſſible, the tranſports of heaven.

2dly. Our future inheritance is undefiled. This world, alas! is ſubject to corruption, not only in the natural ſenſe, but likewiſe in the moral and religious ſenſe. It is a melancholy truth, that our preſent inheritance is the region of moral defilement and depravity. He who would deny this, muſt, in the firſt place, either

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deny his ſenſes, or have loſt them. Man, it is true, was ſent into the world pure and innocent; but wilful diſobedience to the divine commandment ſoon introduced into this our manſion ſin and death, under the cruel vaſſalage of which we ſigh and groan to this day. Vice, alas! ſeems to be the native production of the ſoil, and to ſpring up without cultivation, as weeds grow and flouriſh in the wilderneſs. Reaſon, whoſe province it is to keep the paſſions under due controul, often tamely ſubmits, like a mean ſlave, to the imperious commands of imperious appetites; and judgment, which ſhould rule the life, frequently ſneaks behind the curtain, like a paltry coward, to give way to the baſe indulgence of ſome baſe deſire. The ſurrounding objects of temptation, which ſhould not move the ſoul to deſcend below its native dignity, eaſily ſeduce us from the path of rectitude, and drive us on to a thouſand follies.

Of the pleaſures we enjoy, though many, we hope, are innocent, yet many too,

too, we fear, are guilty. The ſpirit of licentiouſneſs marks the pleaſures of one man, the ſpirit of revenge marks thoſe of another. Some men want charity, others want truth. Crimes the moſt atrocious are committed by the abandoned, and motives black as night impel to the commiſſion. Even the faireſt character upon earth has its ſpots and blemiſhes, and the cleareſt conſcience has its ſtains. Such is the ſituation of things where we live; and if we go into the remoteſt corner of the globe we ſhall find, even there, ſuch a general want of real integrity, as will authorize us to ſay, "in this place, too, hath vice her habitation." SERM. XXIV.

This is another cauſe of man's infelicity on earth; for in exact proportion to the greatneſs of our guilt, will ever be the greatneſs of our miſery. There is an inſeparable connection between vice and puniſhment. Guilty deeds recoil with vengeance on the guilty man, and preſs

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him down with inſufferable anguiſh. A ſhattered body, ruined by intemperance, leans a heavy load upon the ſoul. The girds and ſcourges of upbraiding conſcience tear and diſtract the wounded ſpirit, and the frightful bodings of impending miſery fill with horror the anxious breaſt.

But our future inheritance is undefiled. Nothing that defileth can approach the the manſions of heaven, or blaſt the virtue of its bleſſed inhabitants. There all is chaſte, and all is virtuous. The great author of our happineſs, in whoſe preſence is fulneſs of joy, is virtuous; the ſociety, with which we ſhall incorporate, is virtuous; the diſpoſitions of the mind are virtuous; the delights we ſhall enjoy, are virtuous. In this ſpotleſs region, no baſe paſſion ſhall degrade the ſoul, no impure deſire ſully its brightneſs; but an everlaſting harmony ſhall be eſtabliſhed between paſſion and reaſon, an everlaſting harmony between the ſoul and God. No

temptation

temptation can come within the veil, to ſhake the foundation of our quiet. Tempter and temptations ceaſe for ever; remorſe for guilt, and fear of puniſhment, will diſturb no more. For the former things are paſſed away; and new heavens and a new earth take place, wherein dwelleth righteouſneſs. From heaven vice and guilt are for ever excluded; truth and virtue flouriſh there: there the underſtanding is entertained with immaculate truth; there the affections are delighted with immaculate love; there benevolence circulates through every boſom; there friendſhip joins all hearts in one. SERM. XXIV.

Now, this is the ſecond excellence of our felicity. For as the enjoyments are virtuous, they will ever approve themſelves to virtuous minds; and therefore can never waſte nor cloy the faculty, but will ever yield a freſh and full delight. And every enjoyment will at once gratify and enlarge the appetite; and ſo eſtabliſh a

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solid basis of future progression. But this more properly belongs to the third branch of my subject, upon which at present I will not enter.

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SERMON XXV.

On a FUTURE STATE.

1 PETER 1, 3, 4.

Bleſſed be the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt from the dead; to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

IN my laſt diſcourſe upon this ſubject, I propoſed to illuſtrate SERM. XXV.

1ſt. The nature of our future inheritance.

2dly. The goodneſs of God in bringing us to the hope of it.

3dly:

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3dly. The gratitude which is due from us to God for this goodneſs.

1ſt. As to the nature of our future inheritance, the text aſſures us, that it is incorruptible, that it is undefiled, and that it fadeth not away.

The two firſt of theſe properties, viz. its being incorruptible and undefiled, I have already illuſtrated. I proceed now to illuſtrate the third property, which is, that it fadeth not away.

It is an aſſertion, which needs no proof, that our preſent inheritance is a fading one. This is a neceſſary conſequence of its poſſeſſing the two qualities, of being, at once, corruptible and defiled. For whatever is groſs and mixed in its nature, carries, in its own bowels, the certain rudiments of its own conſumption; and moral defilement tends to the deſtruction of the agent, as death is the puniſhment annexed to depravity.

This world, in its ſubſtance, or at leaſt in its form, is periſhable. It is a maxim with

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with ſome philoſophers, that the earth, like all its productions, has its aſſigned periods of growth and declenſion, and, like ourſelves, tends every moment to infirmity and old age. But whether there is any truth in this doctrine, it is not material for us to enquire, as we are informed by the word of God, "that the time ſhall "ſoon come, when this earth, with all its "works, ſhall be burnt up, and for ever buried in its own aſhes.*

The enjoyments of this inheritance are fading. "They are like the crackling of "thorns under a pot"; a ſudden blaze, but ſoon over. With great propriety are they compared to a flower, which in the ſeaſon of its bloom looks gay and beautiful; then withers away and dies; and owes its death to the influence of the ſame ſun, to which it owed its birth. Even ſo our enjoyments, in the ſpring of life, are ſprightly and vigorous; then by gradual ſteps

* 2 Peter 3, x.

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ſteps grow languid, and decay. Our paſſions, by degrees, turn blunt and jaded; and the commonneſs of the objects, which rouſe them to activity, offends our native taſte and reliſh for variety.

Our hope from earth is fading. "It is "like the duſt, that is blown away by the "wind; like the thin froth, that is driven "away by the ſtorm; like the ſmoke, "that is diſperſed here and there by a "tempeſt; and paſſeth away with the "remembrance of a gueſt that tarrieth but "a day.*

Our friends and companions, the great ſweeteners and cordials of life, are fading. After they have bleſſed us for a while with their agreeable ſociety, they retire from our ſight, go hence and are no more; and leave us comfortleſs and deſolate, "like a lonely ſparrow on a houſe-top." "Our Fathers, where are they? and "the Prophets, do they live for ever?"

Upon

* Apocrypha

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Upon our children we have dropped the kindly tear, and our deareſt friends we ſee no more.

Ourſelves are fading. The years of childhood creep away inſenſibly; youth ſoon flies off with all its ſprightlineſs; old age, with its unavoidable decrepitude, comes at laſt, mocks all our hopes, and tells us we are mortal; then death concludes the flattering ſcene, and lays us in the grave, forgetting and forgot, to reſt in ſilence. What then avails it, my immortal friends, that in the ſpring of life we put forth the tender buds of hope, bloſſom in ſummer, and bear fruit in autumn? for ſoon cold winter, with its nipping froſts, comes on, to wither all our leaves, and blaſt our fruit. Then we fall helpleſs; we fall, and no man ſees us more. This is the laſt diſadvantage of our preſent inheritance, that it is fading and momentary, and therefore cannot ſatisfy the ardent longings of an immortal ſoul, nor be a portion adequate to its wiſhes;

wiſhes,

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wiſhes, which are wide as the circuit of the univerſe, and endleſs as the evolutions of eternity.

But our future inheritance fadeth not away. This is a natural effect of its two former characters. It has no principle of natural corruption, which gradually leads it to decay; it has no principle of moral defilement, which draws deſtruction on it as a puniſhment. It is incorruptible, it is undefiled, and therefore it cannot fade away.

Our future inheritance is eternal; and though this is but a circumſtance, and does not properly enter into the definition of happineſs, yet it is a circumſtance ſo very eſſential, that if you exclude this one idea, you exclude at once the idea of happineſs. For heaven, if you will pardon the expreſſion, would not be heaven without it. God, who is the grand ſource and origin of felicity, is eternal. "He lives for "ever; and becauſe he lives, we ſhall "live alſo, to behold his glory, and to be "ſatisfied

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"ſatisfied with his likeneſs." Our friends are eternal. They ſhall never die; but live for ever, to enjoy the ineffable delights of an everlaſting ſociety. Our enjoyments are eternal. Old age ſhall never creep in, to ſpoil the pleaſures of our immortal youth; wrinkles and deformity ſhall not come there, to diminiſh the luſtre of our unfading beauty. Strife and diſcord ſhall never enter, to embitter the ſweets of our eternal love: but one unbounded proſpect of felicity, for ever and for ever, lies before us. There is a propriety in it, that the enjoyments of this world ſhould be fading, as they are empty; but that the enjoyments of another world ſhould be durable, as they are ſubſtantial; and that heaven, as it is "an exceeding, ſhould likewiſe be an eternal weight of glory."

Now, all this eternity of happineſs is ſecured to us, not only, as we have ſhewn, from the nature of the thing, but alſo, comfortable reflection! by the immutable fidelity of God. "For to him, who, by

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" a patient continuance in well-doing, " ſeeks for glory, and honour, and im- " mortality, he has expreſsly promiſed " eternal life.* Bleſſed is the man who " endureth temptation; for, when he is " tried, he ſhall receive the crown of " life, which fadeth not away."† And the time is faſt approaching, and muſt ſoon arrive, " when this corruption ſhall put " on incorruption, this mortal be clothed " with immortality; then ſhall come to paſs " the ſaying that is written, " death is " ſwallowed up in victory."‡

2dly. I come to illuſtrate the goodneſs of God in begetting us again to the hope of this inheritance. The hope of an inheritance implies ſonſhip. Begetting us again to that hope, conveys to us the idea of a reſtoration to a bleſſing which we once poſſeſſed, but had ſomehow or other unfortunately loſt; and thus implies ſonſhip by adoption. For, the very nature of adoption

* Rom. ii, 12. † James i, 12. ‡ 1 Corinthians xv, 54.

adoption conſiſts in taking an alien into one's own family, and admitting him to all the privileges of one's own children. This practice was conſidered, by the moſt rude and barbarous nations, as an evidence of clemency and love. Man, it is true, by the original law of nature, is the child of God, and if a child, then an heir of life and immortality. But man, like a froward child, by a conduct moſt unfilial, diſſolved this original connection, and loſt for ever his native birthright. Now, in man's reſtoration to this original privilege, the mercy of God is adorably conſpicuous. It is one of the fundamental principles of the Britiſh conſtitution, a principle founded upon the laws of juſtice, good government, and good ſenſe, that whatever property or privileges any man enjoys, under that government, he enjoys only upon the footing of obedience and loyalty; and therefore the moment he manifeſts a ſpirit of rebellion, he forfeits that property, thoſe privileges, and even life

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itſelf; and his children, though not chargeable with his crime, yet to ſecure the wiſe purpoſes of government, and to extirpate the very ſeeds of rebellion, are declared, by expreſs ſtatute, incapable of ſucceſſion and inheritance. Now, if the king, at any future period, ſhall reſtore the children of this revolted ſubject to thoſe privileges which they had loſt through their father's rebellion, is not this an undeniable inſtance of goodneſs and mercy in the ſovereign? Doubtleſs it is; becauſe it is a gratuitous donation, a giving them ſomething, to which, upon the ſtrict ſcore of juſtice, they had not the leaſt ſhadow of claim; and this, if I miſtake not, is the very definition of goodneſs or mercy.

To apply this to the preſent point: our firſt parents poſſeſſed the inheritance of immortality, as their original patrimony; but, like all profligates, they ſquandered away their ſubſtance to gratify their taſte, and, by an act of the moſt daring rebellion againſt the ſovereign of nature, they forfeited

feited this ineſtimable privilege, and, from being the heirs of immortality, became the ſubjects of the grave; and we their children, though not chargeable with the crime of eating the forbidden fruit, yet deſcending from them after they were become mortal by eating that fruit, are, by the very law of our birth, debarred from the poſſeſſion of their original inheritance, and like them, in their debaſed ſtate, muſt "peep about to find ourſelves diſhonourable graves." SERM. XXV.

Now, God has actually reſtored us to that immortality, which Adam forfeited, and which we loſt through his forfeiture, by making our ſufferings the channel of our happineſs, and the grave itſelf the door of immortality. Is not this mercy, yea mercy abundant? The goodneſs of God, in all his works, is viſible; in this work of mercy, it is refulgent. His goodneſs warms us in the morning ſun, and cools us in the evening breeze, ſparkles in the ſtars at midnight, and bloſſoms in the

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flowers of the field; but, in this our reſtoration to a loſt immortality, it beams forth with uncommon ſplendour, and ſhines with all the brightneſs of the ſun.

Now, this reſtoration is ſaid to be effected "by the reſurrection of Chriſt." Why is it not ſaid, by the death of Chriſt? The reaſon is obvious: it was life, which Adam forfeited; it was death, which he incurred. God, purſuant to his purpoſes, would not relax the ſanctions of his law; man, therefore, muſt die. But God, ſtill willing to make man happy, manifeſts his loving-kindneſs to him, by conducting him, through the paſſage of the tomb, to the immortal poſſeſſion of a poſthumous life. The reſurrection of Chriſt, therefore, is more forcible than the death of Chriſt, becauſe his reſurrection not only preſuppoſes his death in all its virtue, but alſo is an actual inſtance of the triumph of life over death, and thereby aſcertains to us the abſolute certainty of our own reſurrection.

3dly. I

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3dly. I come to illuſtrate the gratitude, which is due from us to God, in return for this goodneſs. Gratitude, my friends, conſiſts in a deep ſenſe of favours received, attended with a ſincere deſire of making ſuitable returns. Gratitude is an elevated and elevating virtue; deſtitute of which, a man is not intitled to bear the name of a man.* A man without gratitude is worſe than a brute; for even brutes diſcover ſome ſentiments of reſpect and gratitude. "The Ox knoweth his owner; and the "Aſs, his maſter's crib." And is it poſſible, that a man can be a greater brute than an Aſs? Againſt this idea nature revolts, and the voice of reaſon loudly exclaims. As gratitude is in itſelf a generous and manly virtue, the certain effect of a great ſoul, and the certain mark of a good man; ſo, in

* A favour ſhould be treaſur'd in the ſoul,
And made the mother of a kind return;
A wretch, that ſtifles benefits beſtow'd,
Scarcely deſerves the generous name of man.

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in exact proportion to the greatneſs of the happineſs conferred upon us, ſhould be the livelineſs of our gratitude to him who confers it.

Now, the greateſt benefit which man can receive, nay the greateſt benefit which even God can beſtow, is endleſs felicity: endleſs felicity God ſets before us; the ſublimeſt gratitude, therefore, which our ſouls can feel, ſhould, like incenſe, aſcend to heaven, as an acceptable ſacrifice to our great benefactor. What, ſhall we be grateful to men, for little, pitiful advantages, in the line of civil or eccleſiaſtic promotion, which, at the beſt, will laſt but a few days, and, even while they laſt, will yield but a very ſuperficial enjoyment? And ſhall we, with reſpect to God, remain ſtupidly inſenſible to the moſt endearing expreſſions of the moſt endearing love? If ſuch monſtrous perverſity of ſentiment could exiſt in our boſoms, heaven would bluſh at our depravity; earth, groſs it is, would be ſhocked at our ſtupidity; and hell

hell itſelf, were it poſſible, would be aſhamed of our ingratitude.

To conclude: Since the mercy of God has ſet before us an inheritance refined, virtuous, immortal, let us expreſs our gratitude to God, and our regard to ourſelves, by an induſtrious preparation for the unfading delights of that divine inheritance.

Preparation for eternity is an univerſal duty, becauſe eternity is an univerſal concern. Into its manſions, yet unſeen, we muſt all ſoon enter, and there take up our unchangeable abode. Soon the throbbing heart muſt ceaſe to beat, and every vital ſpark forſake the ſenſeleſs clay. Oh, let us not, then, ſet up our everlaſting reſt in a country ſo far from home; a country, where all is mixed and mutable, and almoſt nothing certain, but a grave. But let us, like chriſtian travellers, ſend our hearts before us, to poſſeſs thoſe joys, thoſe ſolid and exalted joys, which dwell beyond the grave, in the celeſtial world, whilſt, by lives of inflexible integrity, we approve

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approve ourſelves to our conſciences, and approve our conſciences to God.

This, this will yield us ſubſtantial conſolation amidſt all the drooping moments of adverſity, and make us riſe ſuperior to all the viciſſitudes of a giddy life. This will inſpire us with chearfulneſs in our journey to the tomb, and cauſe the moments of our pilgrimage to glide ſoftly away. When our ſmall glaſs of time is run to the laſt ſand, and the ſoul is juſt ready to launch into eternity, this will enable us to think with pleaſure upon God, when we can think with pleaſure upon nothing elſe. And even at laſt, when the ſolemn hour ſhall come, that will ſummon us to remove from theſe tabernacles of clay, we ſhall with alacrity obey the ſummons, wing our flight to the celeſtial paradiſe, and there enthroned ſhall ſhine "as the "brightneſs of the firmament, and as the "ſtars for ever and ever." Amen!

FINIS.

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